THE COMMONWEAL

A Weekly Review of Literature, The Arts and Public Affairs

Volume XIII | New York, Wednesday, December 24, 1930 | Number 8

EDITORIAL BOARD

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, Editor
GEORGE N. SHUSTER, Managing Editor
MARY KOLARS, Assistant Editor
FREDERIC THOMPSON, Assistant Editor

JOHN F. MCCORMICK, Business Manager

EDITORIAL COUNCIL

CARLTON J. H. HAYES
T. LAWRASON RIGGS
RICHARD DANA SKINNER
JAMES J. WALSH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

An Explosion of Truth 197
Week by Week 198
Reflections on Harmony 202
Einstein and Freud ..... James J. Walsh 203
Recompensed (*verse*) ..... Carol Noel 204
Log Fire of a Wanderer ..... Louis Golding 205
Places and Persons ..... Richard Linn Edsall 207
Where I Took Hold of Life (*verse*) ..... Robert P. Tristram Coffin 208
Europe's Windiest Corner ..... George N. Shuster 209
December ..... Sheila Kaye-Smith 211
The Besetting Virtue ..... Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt 212
The Owners of Owes ..... Harvey Wickham 214
Communications 215
The Play ..... Richard Dana Skinner 217
Holly around the Crib (*verse*) ..... Sister Mary of the Visitation 218
Books ..... Cuthbert Wright, Morton Dauwen Zabel, John Gilland Brunini, Sister M. Eleanore, Mary Ellen Chase, Grace H. Sherwood 219

Published weekly and copyrighted 1930, in the United States by the Calvert Publishing Corporation, Grand Central Terminal, New York, N. Y. United States: $5.00; Foreign: $6.00; Canada: $5.50. Single Copies: $.10.

AN EXPLOSION OF TRUTH

WE HAVE said on many occasions in these pages that the maze of misery in which the whole world is wandering at present can never be understood, still less traversed safely, unless the statesmen and the leaders of our economic system—those men who are the masters of the modern world, although they are not really mastering it—pay heed to the voice of the Catholic Church. By this we do not mean that a miracle of religious conversion, universal and instantaneous, must needs be worked before humanity can solve its temporal problems. We do mean, however, that plain, downright, common sense demands that what an institution possessing beyond any other human group the fruits of human experience garnered through twenty centuries of wars, and famines, and revolutions, and every species of economic and moral method, has to say about fundamental principles, should be heeded and studied.

We find this week some grounds for hope that this may happen, as we read the remarks made by Thomas L. Chadbourne, of New York, in the course of his address to the international conference of the representatives of the sugar industry at Brussels. As everybody who is trying, even if bewilderedly, to follow the intricate series of world-wide conferences that are attempting to deal with world problems, must be aware, few of the main industries of the world are in a worse condition than the sugar trade. Unusual importance is attached to the conference at Brussels. In the recent meeting of world business leaders in Paris for the council session of the International Chamber of Commerce there was, as the New York *Times* reporter, Carlisle MacDonald, points out, a belief that world industries themselves, acting as the sugar industry is doing just now, and not governments, will find the way out of the current world crisis in raw materials. Hoping, therefore, that a just and practical world agreement will emerge from the conference of business rivals at Brussels, and that such a success would lead to similar agreements in other basic industries, economists, as Mr. MacDonald says, "believe that a long step will have been taken in placing the world economic structure upon the road to recovery."

What Mr. Chadbourne—to whose efforts the present effort to solve the sugar crisis is said to be chiefly due—had to say at Brussels is described as a "bombshell." He asserted "that the whole capitalistic system was on trial at the Brussels meeting." He declared

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the sugar industry, like most other industries, had "transgressed good economic laws and there is as a result enormous overproduction in practically all world commodities . . . resulting in an unemployment situation unthought of a year ago and unheard of for generations, if ever, before." A bigger case than the single one of sugar, therefore, was on trial at Brussels. The whole capitalistic system was on trial. If the men running world industries bring about such depressions as the present one, and are unwilling or unable to mend such conditions, "no matter what the sacrifice may be to individuals," Mr. Chadbourne warned his hearers, "the people who are suffering from it will challenge our system just as inevitably as the earth goes around the sun." And no doubt Mr. Chadbourne's hearers thought of Soviet Russia, which has already issued that challenge, and is trying to promote it outside as well as inside of Russia through a plan which has been thoughtfully conceived, if bungled in certain instances in execution.

But this, to our way of thinking, was not the real bombshell contained in Mr. Chadbourne's address. What he said was true enough, and familiar enough, but when he described the root reason for the troubles of the sugar industry, as well as other industries, he spoke as with the voice of the Church, and he uttered truth deeper and stronger than merely economic facts. For he described the failures in economic laws as issuing mainly from transgressions of the moral law. "The sugar industry is not alone in suffering from the selfish greed of its constituent parts," he said, and again he blamed the greed of the heads of industry as the chief cause in bringing about the world depression, in his later warning that the whole capitalistic system was on trial.

This we believe to be sound doctrine, not merely theological, but economical and political as well. It is sin that is at the bottom of the world crisis. Leo XIII told the modern world precisely what was wrong with it a good many years ago, when he referred to the fact that a small number of rich men had through greed succeeded in laying a burden on the shoulders of the laboring masses that was little less than slavery itself.

It is not blind, materialistic, fatalistic economic or social "law" that brings about the worst miseries from which we humans suffer. It is something that is controllable by human will. It is sin. That truth has at last been recognized at a world conference of economists and industrialists. It is what the Church has said, is now saying and will go on saying till the end of time. The explosion of the light of that truth at Brussels may prove to be the best news yet uttered since the world depression began. It is a confession. It will be good for the soul of the world. And if repentance follows, reparation too will come, and a new epoch among men. Even the failure of the Brussels conference—reported as we go to press—only emphasizes the urgency of recognizing this truth.

WEEK BY WEEK

NOW THAT the clouds of oratory begin to settle a little, and some distance, even though slight, gives an opportunity for an inclusive view, the Briand plan for a United States of Europe is seen to emerge with a strong core of agreements and a scattering, and certainly not insuperable, periphery of oppositions. The publication by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace of the replies of the twenty-six governments to the memorandum of the French Foreign Minister proposing a European federal union presents a splendid basis for a comprehensive survey of the matter. Ultimately the plan will give substance to the philosophy of France on international politics, which that shrewd and notably logical nation has been seeking to put into effect since the war. The formula of France, that sought as the aims and also the order of international rapprochements, first, security, second, arbitration, and third, disarmament, has gradually been modified. France, having built up an army which she felt assured her of requisite security, has placed arbitration first. This means what well may be an epochal triumph of the recognition of a principle; in the present case that only by the establishment of workable agencies for the pacific settlement of international disagreements, may the will for peace be preserved. Heretofore, national disagreements having no settlement except by the exercise of *forces majeures*—whether death-dealing arms in action or diplomatic suggestion that merely cloaked the threats of the forces that could be mustered—wars were considered inevitable. Might assumed to make right, but over a long time could not, because injustice is nursed by the injured, while it is soon forgotten, glossed over or put out of mind by the satisfied mighty. The new principle recognized that both parties to a dispute must have reasonable assurance that justice shall govern a settlement.

Plans for Peace

ENGLAND has seen in the Briand plan a sectional organization which would either duplicate or controvert the work being accomplished by the League of Nations, and has assumed to see in it merely a large alliance which could make trouble on a large scale. Also, England would be oviously in a peculiar position because as part of an empire the bulk of which geographically and numerically was not European, she could not belong to an association that might be in conflict with one of her own members. Germany welcomed the plan and hoped that it would be a means for "a bold reform of conditions which are recognized as untenable" and advocated the inclusion in the union of Russia and Turkey. Italy also emphasized the last point, assented to the ultimate aim of the plan, and noted that the major problem would be to reconcile the union with the League of Nations. Austria recognized the essential principle, stating "a decisive step

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

toward the rational development and organization of the economic forces of Europe cannot be made until all possibility of war between the European countries has been removed." This in effect is the core of the matter to which practically all of the other countries answering adhered. It is the hopeful sign of the whole enterprise, that should not, and must not, be obscured by the old suspicions that cling to human nature as a result of the wounds which remain from the evils of the old system. The federal union of Europe, by its control of the strictly local difficulties of Europe, might reassure those people who in our own country are at present opposed to our adherence to the League of Nations or the World Court because they feel we should not be involved in the settlement of Europe's local differences.

THE SORRY farce in Moscow reached its ludicrous climax with the commutation of the death sentences passed so impressively on the so-called traitors. The elaborate publicity arrangements totally failed to impress the world outside of Russia. Whether the strenuous efforts of the Soviet higher command to create new enthusiasm among the people for its policy by spreading a scare of intervention will succeed, remains to be seen. At any rate, few people outside of Russia, except those already committed to blind belief in the righteousness of Communism, could do anything but laugh at the flimsy evidence presented, involving either the French or the British Foreign Offices with the efforts of the little group of technicians who confessed to their attempts to sabotage the Soviet system. Meanwhile, it is gratifying to note that Secretary of State Stimson assures the public that non-recognition of the Soviet by the United States is still the policy at Washington. That policy, we believe, is favored by most Americans. The support given for financial reasons to Moscow by various commercial concerns will, no doubt, continue; for the ethics of business are not always of a parity with the ethics of government, still less with those of religion; but at least it is good news that the Soviet is still to be denied the enormous aid it hopes to receive through the official recognition of the United States. This may be one of the results of the Moscow trial not anticipated by its stage managers.

Moscow's Farce

WHEN, a few weeks ago, we remarked in connection with the Reverend John Haynes Holmes's denunciation of the degraded condition of the New York theatre, that if such warnings are left unheeded by the managers and the various organizations and individuals controlling the stage, then legal censorship is bound to come, we did not anticipate that so influential an organ of public opinion as *America* was on the point of urging that censorship might be given a trial. For years, *America*, like THE COMMONWEAL, has opposed censorship, in the hope that the theatre itself, through such groups as Actors' Equity League, would effect a reformation from inside. But *America* is thoroughly discouraged by the inattention paid by the producers and managers to all the pleas to them to clean house. The stand taken by the Dramatists' Guild against any form of control, save the inoperative section 1140 of the Penal Code, which was adhered to by Equity and the representatives of the producers and the managers, apparently has convinced *America* that legal censorship may be worth trying. That it is likely to be fought for seems certain. Already there has been a move for joint action on the part of thirty organizations led by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice to prevent the success of a campaign which is being carried on by theatrical groups to secure legislation to exempt actors from being penalized if a play is judged immoral. These organizations may carry the fight into the enemy's territory by pressing for a censorship law. Sentiment, if not proof, that the step is necessary will probably aid them in view of the report of the Postmaster-General that traffic in obscene reading matter and pictures has notably increased.

Censorship Approaching

FROM Maryknoll, where the missionaries are trained —men and women, priests, nuns and lay workers—to go into the ends of the earth to spread the Gospel of Christ, there has come a suggestion of a plan for dealing with the Chinese situation which we are glad to communicate to our readers. Every day reports come of the horrors and agonies of that situation. In a world facing troubles in every land, these reports create little interest. Many of the best-informed observers of the complex problems of the Orient profess themselves baffled. Perhaps it is time for politicians and statesmen and economists to listen to a truly Christian voice urging that Christ's law of charity be used where human means have failed. Maryknoll knows the truth about China; Maryknoll's interest in China is not based on trade or commerce, and this voice from Maryknoll should be heeded:

Charity for China

"ACCORDING to competent observers, millions of Chinese are this year doomed to die by famine. Millions have already met death in the same terrible way these past few years along the Yellow and Han rivers. Millions of human beings dying for want of the food rotting on American farms! Horrible death on one side of the Pacific! Overproduction and unemployment on the other! The wheat and corn lying unwanted on our Western prairies could save China's millions. The railroads begging for shipments; the steamships rusting at our docks waiting for cargoes; the thousands of unemployed seeking honest labor—all these could get the surplus food to the far East. Victorious Chiang Kai Shek, with 2,000,000 soldiers to disband, fears demobilization will mean more piracy and banditry.

LIBRARY
ST. CHARLES SEMIN
CARTHAGENA, OHIO
LICENSED TO ARCHIVE.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He knows only too well that soldiers out of work must eat, and the only way to eat in that poverty-stricken country is by plunder. Yet these very bandits are only too eager to earn their keep by honest toil if given the chance. Able-bodied men and their equally strong wives would gladly carry the grain on their shoulders, where railroads and canals do not suffice. These same Chinese, given the barest necessities of life, would gladly build roads on which this food could be hauled by American-built trucks and tractors. With this minimum of food, China could be permanently bettered by irrigation dikes and channels, and with wells dug deep, all against the alternate foes of flood and drought. Here in the United States, farm, factory, railroads and shipping, all would benefit, while, in China, untold millions would be saved from death so ghastly that we shudder at the thought. Why not? All that is needed is money. Much money, yes; but not so much as would be required for the smallest war; nor even perhaps for temporary unemployment relief, to do no lasting good. And the money would be like bread cast on the waters —to return again. China would make its debt of gratitude a far more binding obligation than any indemnity imposed by conquering foe. Given a fair chance now, relieved of famine and famine's offspring, banditry and war, China will soon take her rightful place among the nations. Why not? If politicians were statesmen, we would not need to ask the question. If statesmen were true Christians we would not need to ask, 'Why not?' "

Revolt from Mechanism

COMPLAINTS or accusations of the "machine age," and its supposed dangers or evils, on the part of poets or artists, are common enough, and, so far as casual observation goes to show, are about as effective in stemming the mechanization of life as are the songs of a bird, or the gesture of a butterfly. A protest from a "wealthy engineer, and former associate of Thomas A. Edison," however, being at least a novelty, may command more attention. John Van Nostrand Dorr, speaking before the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, declared that "unless this production-mad nation develops a higher, more leisured civilization, it is doomed to be enslaved to its own machines." He fears that not only the United States but all mankind as well has overvalued the industrial age. "We eventually will become lost in the multiplicity of things which sustain or amuse us unless we do more than invent machines, or processes," said Mr. Dorr. "In saying this I may seem at odds with my profession but I cannot believe only in the endless production of more and more material things." In his novel, "Erewhon," Samuel Butler foresaw a great revolution against machinery on the part of man, and a deliberate return to a machineless mode of life. Of all the Utopias ever visioned, Butler's story seems today the most impossible. Yet warnings such as this one uttered by Mr. Dorr multiply, at least outside the professional circles of mechanicians. For one of the inner circle to join the critics is at least a portent.

Belgium's Calamity

PRONOUNCEMENTS on the "mystery fog" which recently wrought such tragic havoc in Belgium are still tentative, but one can infer that the investigating scientists believe it to have been laden with vitriol from zinc and chemical factories. The dense, low cloud-blanket apparently collected the poisonous fumes, which are normally dissipated into the upper air, and held them in a concentrated solution which proved deadly to scores whose resistance had been impaired by bronchial or pulmonary weaknesses. It is not to be wondered at that, in the first shock of the disaster, the comment should have matched the mystery, and there should have been talk of deadly gases cached by the German army of occupation, or of a new visitation of the Black Death. That the more accurate diagnosis was so speedily formulated is due, it is said, mainly to the efforts of the Queen of the Belgians. The energy of this mother of her people, which wrote such a splendid chapter of World War history, again came into play. She realized that the most effective way to fight the menace and allay the panic was to learn the facts, and she resolutely organized immediate measures for doing so. She visited the endangered villages in person; disregarded the first explanations as too superficial, and insisted on the appointment of a special committee of investigation; and finally forced the convening of a Cabinet council, to halt the burials of the dead, and make possible the autopsies on which the latest findings are largely based.

Socratic Freshmen

THE COLUMBIA professor who has been waxing indignant in the newspapers about the failure of one of his freshman classes to produce adequate answers to the quiz on contemporary civilization which he sprang on them, gets no sympathy from us. We are entirely with the students. Indeed, we will go so far as to say that their confessedly unilluminated state in regard to the nine topics they were asked to dispose of within a fifty-minute time limit—topics ranging from "Compatibility in Modern Marriage" to "The New Education and the Old"—seems to us one of the few hopeful signs we have met with that the younger generation are returning to that sanity so conspicuously abandoned by their elders and betters. If there is anything that contemporary civilization is suffering from, it is precisely the habit of getting to the core of important questions in a hurry. It is just those brightly definitive social thinkers who can function at the drop of a hat who have thrown overboard most of our traditional wisdom and morality and our cautious common sense. Such a thinker will ponder some odd half-hour on the problem of the feeble-minded, and emerge with a sterilization program; or on economics, and emerge with Communism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or birth control. None of the clogging conservatism of the past, the troubling reflection that these questions are very old and very complex, the inhibiting suspicion that one may not know it all, for him! If the Columbia freshmen represent a departure from this type of philosopher, it is welcome news indeed. They may be, in the terms of the complaint, "sadly prosaic," "shockingly ill equipped in English and defective in logical capacity"; but they seemingly have the intellectual grace to know when they do not know. And since we have reverted to Socrates, does their instructor honestly think he could get anything out of that sage within a fifty-minute time limit?

Simon Bolivar

THAT the eloquent felicitations addressed by Archbishop Hanna, as chairman of the administration committee of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, to the Archbishop of Bogotá on the centenary of the death of Simon Bolivar, the national hero of Colombia, and pioneer of Pan-Americanism, was more than a mere gesture, is proved by the special exercises held in many Catholic schools, and by the programs of commemoration carried out by Catholic lay organizations. As Archbishop Hanna points out, Bolivar's great work in liberating South America from Spanish rule was upheld and inspired by strong religious faith. Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, befriended the Liberator when he visited the United States to plead for help in his fight for liberty. The Catholics of the United States should be moved to greater effort to collaborate and fraternize with the Catholics of the countries south of us by this action on the part of our bishops in recognizing the value to all America of the work of Simon Bolivar. We shall publish an article in our next number relating the success which has come to Bolivar's great dream, not a complete success, of course, but one greater than is won by most idealists who give their lives for humanity's progress.

Wisdom of Youth

WE WERE recalled to reflections on how our times do progress recently when young Miss Ishbel MacDonald, daughter of the British Prime Minister, spoke across the ocean to the United States. The sense of this is more or less literal as her remarks were broadcast throughout the country. Some picked them out of the ether; some did not. Those that did were rewarded with a sound analysis of what should be the aims of social welfare work. She spoke of the old-fashioned Christmas party, popular in less democratic times, when a few poor would be had in by the wealthy family to see the Christmas tree and receive some not-too-expensive presents, then, dazzled, be dismissed into their outer darkness and cold, while the wealthy stayed by their warm fire, warmed interiorly also by a pleasant glow of reminiscence of their munificence. Miss MacDonald compared some social work to such a party and reflected that it led to nothing. "This is not what I call social service," she said. "Social service should have two functions, the function of curing and the function of preventing social diseases. A third function which creeps in is the function of appeasing." This is excellent advice and reflects credit on the seriousness and good intentions of England's younger generation. In the face of the want in our midst this winter, we might well follow the advice, putting appeasement of those who are hungry and cold and destitute first, then settling down seriously to cure the causes of such distress and to take measures that will prevent its recurrence.

Merry-Makers All

WITH 4,000 guests inside the church and 1,000 outside, said by the papers to be milling around, while five uneasy men each of whom was carrying a pistol were removed by uninvited plain-clothes detectives, and the eighteen-year-old bride wore a gown of white satin with a train twenty-five feet long and carried a bouquet of 400 lillies of the valley and was attended by five bridesmaids in pink taffeta dresses and blue shoes, two of Chicago's picturesque "alky" baronial houses were joined in nuptials. Like princes and princesses of historic realms, the bride, Al Capone's sister, and the groom, brother of Frank Diamond, are reported to have had not a great deal to say about the marriage which was arranged for the strengthening of "beer and other interests." Alphonse Capone was unable to attend because he heads a list of Chicago's published "public enemies" and was declared to be inconveniently wanted for refusing to answer questions about his federal income tax which he took to be impertinent. Meanwhile, he maintains a free soup kitchen for Chicago's poor. The inconsistencies to which our muddled legal—and in extension, moral—systems have given birth, are completed in the round of the ridiculous by Mrs. Mabel Walker Willebrandt's championing of the delivery of grape concentrates to the home, where their working, as well as her work, are all within the letter of the law.

Unprejudiced Evidence

FURTHER signs that the best brains of the country are not the dupes of prohibition and of its professional advocates, are being constantly given. We have recently had the vote of the American Bar Association which stood two to one for repeal, and we now have the pool of the members of the National Economic League which, reversing its previous stand on the matter, shows it to have a clear majority for repeal. This association of many of the country's business and political leaders gives an indication of the progress in public opinion toward reform of the present methods of controlling the traffic in alcoholic beverages. Four years ago the league opposed repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment by 52 percent of its voting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strength, while it has now declared itself by 55 percent to be in favor of repeal. Members of its executive committee are Ambassador Dawes, John Hayes Hammond, David Starr Jordan, James Rowland Angel, A. Lawrence Lowell, Edward A. Filene, Nicholas Murray Butler, Frank O. Lowden, Harry A. Garfield, Silas H. Strawn and George W. Wickersham. It is to be hoped that the latter will take these reputable expressions of public sentiment into the considerations of the President's committee on law enforcement.

REFLECTIONS ON HARMONY

THOSE whose avocation it is to search for the silver linings in clouds may find much to interest them in the strange political situation at the national capital. For years it has been the hope of serious students of politics that there might be a new alignment of parties along lines more fundamental than the identity of postmasters or ambassadors. There is some ground for believing that the current economic depression may prove to be the stimulus needed to bring about a new line-up.

Chief among the reasons for such belief is the remarkable drawing together of Republican and Democratic leaders as the present session of Congress gets under way.

When seven leaders of the national Democracy united in their now famous "harmony" pledge just after the November elections, there were many who swallowed it with a liberal dose of salt. The spectacle of the Democrats in coöperation with their Insurgent-Republican allies tearing the Hoover administration to shreds during the long-drawn tariff fight was still too fresh in the public mind for anyone to believe that the elephant and the donkey could lie down together in peace. At the most, it was thought, the Democrats simply wanted to prevent the stock market from going into a new nose-dive in reaction to the Democratic election landslide. Perhaps that idea had something to do with the issuance of the harmony manifesto, but the first test vote in the Senate after the assembling of Congress proved that there was something deeper involved.

The vote came on the question of allowing Senator James J. Davis to take the oath of office. Less than a year before the Senate had refused to seat William S. Vare, also a Republican senator-elect from Pennsylvania, because $780,000 had been expended on behalf of the ticket of which he was a part in the Republican primary. When Mr. Davis presented his credentials to the Senate it had been shown that $629,000 had been expended on behalf of his primary ticket and substantial additions to that total are being made daily as this is written. Whether the Senate was justified in excluding Vare is an open question which need not be argued here. But, unless membership in the Senate is to be determined on the basis of admission to a social club, there is no plausible reason why Mr. Davis should have been seated after Mr. Vare had been excluded.

But just at this point the Democratic harmony program enters to explain the inexplicable. Not a single Democratic Senator voted to seat Mr. Vare in December, 1929. In December, 1930, nineteen Democrats voted to seat Mr. Davis. The answer to this is "coöperation."

Less than two hours before the Senate voted on the Davis case Senator Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, the Democratic leader, called his party steering committee together. Having been one of the signers of the harmony ukase, Mr. Robinson was in a position to tell his colleagues what that document meant. Many of them had been wondering. He told them it meant that the Democrats must do nothing which would lead the public, particularly the business and financial interests, to look upon the Democrats as radicals. A radical in the Senate is anyone who does not go along with the administration; the administration wanted Mr. Davis to be seated; hence, the Democrats must vote to seat Mr. Davis. The Democrats did.

The reason the Democrats did so is that the national leadership in both major parties is indubitably conservative on economic lines; and times like the present are occasions upon which conservatives must stand together. Most prominent among those opposed to seating Mr. Davis were the members of the Republican-Insurgent group—"sons of the wild jackass" in the polite phrase of Senator Moses (Republican, of New Hampshire). By voting to seat Mr. Davis the Democrats served notice to the country that they are having nothing to do with the Insurgents, their erstwhile boon companions in the tariff and farm relief battles.

Whether or not Mr. Davis is a senator is important, doubtless, to Mr. Davis, but the Democratic break with the Republican Progressives is important to the nation. For some of the Democrats refused to enter the runway presented to them by Senator Robinson: nineteen followed the leader, and seventeen refused. It was no coincidence that the seventeen who refused are, almost without exception, those whose views on economics coincide largely with the Western progressive bloc.

If the division brought about by the first application of the coöperation program continues, the Senate for the first time in a century will be split along a line that is something more than a difference in the spelling of party labels. It will be a very confusing situation for a time, because instead of two parties bearing distinguishing tags there will be four parties: two nominally Republican and two nominally Democratic with one segment of each aligned against the other two segments. But once the line of division becomes fixed, the matter of nomenclature could be attended to without difficulty. Party names are generally produced after the fashion of the famous Topsy, anyway.

It took a civil war to produce the most recent of the major political parties, so perhaps it would not be surprising if a stock market crash and an unemployment crisis were necessary to carry on the species.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EINSTEIN AND FREUD

By JAMES J. WALSH

The transit in this country of Professor Einstein makes timely the following article on the professor's famous theory that may suggest a plausible explanation of the quizzical smile on the professor's face. Probably he was the first to be astonished by a confusion in the popular mind, whereby his hypothesis has been hailed as though it had been fully proved and demonstrated. The unpresuming and orderly scholarship that is being pursued at Johns Hopkins, which Dr. Walsh describes, is of real importance, and appears to have given the final word on Freud as well as on Einstein.—The Editors.

JUST when the majority of those who felt that they ought to have an opinion on the subject had about made up their minds that Einstein was to be considered as a great modern seer, and his theory set down as a marvelous new development of human thought, comes the declaration from a man who surely ought to have a right to an opinion in the matter, that Einstein is a false prophet, whose system of thought unfortunately many scientists are accepting blindly without anything like sufficient proof. It is rather startling under the circumstances to find that one of our most distinguished scientists in this country, a well-known mathematician and astronomer, professor of celestial mechanics at Columbia University, is quite ready to proclaim emphatically that scientists are simply being led astray by the German mathematician and theorist. He feels that it is just a question of a sensational novelty sweeping people off their feet.

Professor Poor goes so far as to say, in the concluding paragraph of his article in Scribner's for November on "What Einstein Really Did":

> The claim of Einstein to have found a new law of gravitation and the many assertions that the theory of relativity has worked in accounting for the motion of Mercury and has been conclusively proved by the eclipse observations and by the displacement of spectral lines, are all merely unproved and so far really unsupported illusions.

This is rather emphatic language from a recognized scientific authority on the very subject which Einstein's theory is supposed to affect most deeply, but also from which it has to derive its proofs if they are to be secured. Professor Poor goes even farther than to pronounce Einstein's theorizings unsupported delusions, for he does not hesitate to suggest that the startling new theory is a mere imaginative fancy of an overenthusiastic theorist who has caught many followers by the sensational novelty of his formula. The men of our generation are so convinced of the wonderful progress that we are making in our day that a great many of them are ready to accept almost any proclamation that has an air of novelty and is couched in scientific language. It is amusing to the last degree to have Professor Poor declare in poetic language:

> Einstein and his followers have been dwelling in the 'pleasing land of drowsyhed—' in the land
>
> 'Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eyes.'

If Professor Poor were a notoriety-seeking young teacher who wanted to get the ear of the public and did not mind very much how that might be secured, it would be easy to think that this was just another instance of a dwarf hacking at the shins of a giant and causing him some annoyance but no real disturbance. As a matter of fact, Professor Poor has an established reputation in the scientific world that makes his opinion on any subject connected with higher mathematics or celestial mechanics of distinct significance. It is nearly thirty years now since he received the degree of Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins, and immediately afterward became a member of the faculty there. His ability was so thoroughly recognized that he succeeded Simon Newcomb, who had been his professor at the head of the astronomical department at Johns Hopkins. I need scarcely say that Professor Newcomb had been looked upon as one of the world's authorities in this subject, and his successor was considered well worthy to follow his master in his chair at the university.

Professor Poor is, however, no mere dry-as-dust delver into books; least of all is he a preoccupied academic professor with scarcely a thought beyond his specialty. Nearly twenty years of his life were given to business, and he might well be described as a hard-headed business man. In the midst of his business life, however, he was professor of astronomy at Columbia University for some ten years, and for a dozen years has been professor of celestial mechanics at that institution.

He is a thoroughly practical-minded man, then, and knows his subject very well, and his opinion with regard to the Einstein theory is worthy of the most serious consideration. What he has to say on the subject is expressed without any regard for popular opinion. It is not clouded by technical terms and everyone can understand the meaning. After discussing two of the crucial tests on which the Einstein theory is supposed to stand or fall—the observed irregularity of Mercury in its revolution around the sun, and the bent light rays observed in eclipses—the conclusions that Einstein and his followers would put upon them are shown to be delusions.

The third test, the displacement of the lines in the spectrum toward the red end, Einstein himself has declared to be the very crux of his theory of relativity. The German mathematical theorist went so far as to say that, if this displacement does not exist, then the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

general theory of relativity is untenable. Professor Poor says of this:

> There is neither rhyme nor reason in Einstein's specific formula, nor in his prediction of a specific shift in the spectral lines.

He had said:

> The sole basis for his [Einstein's] formula, is a revamped and modernized version of Jules Verne's story of an imaginary trip to the moon.

Surely a university professor would not indulge in such strong language if he were not convinced that a number of his colleagues were being carried away by an alluring bit of theory.

It looks as though we would have to put back Einstein and his theory into the lumber room of outworn speculations which has become so crowded in our day. After all, that would not be surprising. We are engaged at the present moment in carefully laying Freud away in the garret, though fifteen years ago there were a great many people, not a few of them professors of psychology and still more of them professors of neurology and specialists in nervous diseases, who were quite sure that Freud represented one of those marvelous geniuses who wander out into the realms of the hitherto unknown and bring back precious truth to be a heritage for mankind ever after. Some of them went so far as to say that Darwin and Freud were the two greatest men of modern times. It was a Johns Hopkins man, Professor Knight Dunlap, of the department of psychology, who gave Freud his first serious knockout blow a dozen years ago by his emphatic declaration:

> Scientific psychology removes the grounds on which the doctrine of unconsciousness is based . . . [and leaves no function] for the mystic unconsciousness even if one should wish to posit it.

Jennings, who is professor of zoölogy at Johns Hopkins, has recently delivered a similar knockout to behaviorism in his volume, "The Biological Basis of Human Nature." One is tempted to say: "Thank God for Johns Hopkins!"

It seems certain now that Freud's unconscious, and with it very probably Einstein's relativity, will have to be packed aboard the raft of disillusionment and allowed to float down the stream of time, to be forgotten except by those who pore over musty tomes ferreting out the curious things for which mankind (and especially the educated among them) have fallen. There are a lot of things packed away in that galley now, not alone from the older time, as so many people fondly imagine, but also from the past generation or two. Phrenology will bear them good company, though many of the distinguished professors, not only in our own universities but also in Germany, England and France, were such enthusiastic devotees of it. As practical-minded a man as Horace Mann died a convinced phrenologist. We shall have to crowd the others over a bit in order to find room for hypnotism, which had two periods of popularity among the intellectuals during the nineteenth century and is now known to be only a form of induced hysteria. It was not surprising that psychoanalysis should have gained wide recognition from the educated classes at the beginning of the century following that which had made so much of phrenology and ran the gamut of curious delusions every decade since. The tragedies of science are the ambitious, inflated theories that have been punctured by a rude fact but oh! the seriousness with which they were taken by their devotees until the end came.

I wonder if the intellectuals will take the lesson of waiting until theories are proved before accepting them as truths. The most important effect of scholarship is the recognition of the limitations of our knowledge. We are solving a few problems but we are multiplying all the mysteries around us. There is a feeling abroad, however, that we are making such wonderful progress in knowledge that the explanation of almost any of the mysteries of the world may be expected to develop in our precious time.

After all, are we not "the heirs of all the ages in the foremost files of time"? Hence the readiness with which theorists of all kinds find a following. It is only to be expected that we should know ever so much more about all sorts of things than our poor old-fashioned ancestors ever even dreamed of. If there is a sensational novelty, then by all means let us have it, and the more sensational the more attractive it will be. Novelty alone, if it is only audacious enough, will attract a crowd of people who are afraid that by some chance someone else may get ahead of them in accepting new ideas which they are sure are blossoming all the time in our wonderfully progressive period.

Recompensed

I walked with the Wise Men
To seek my King,
I went with the shepherds,
A lambkin to bring.

I wandered away,
The star disappeared,
I groped in the darkness,
Sharp thorns I feared.

I came unto Bethlehem,
Tattered and torn,
A beggar, an outcast,
Pierced by a thorn.

I knelt near the manger,
To see the Child,
I laid there my lambkin,
The Baby smiled.

I knelt and I prayed,
My heart was worn.
Then the Christ Child reached
And took my thorn.

CAROL NOEL.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOG FIRE OF A WANDERER

By LOUIS GOLDING

IT IS Christmas Eve. The curtains are drawn across my room, but I have not turned the light on. They've put sprays of holly around the pictures, and a sprig of mistletoe is hanging just beyond the door. I've been busy all day. So have the others. And now for the first time I have the leisure to stretch out my feet before the fire, and take out my pipe, and give word for word to the dancing eloquent flames. For it's the first Christmas I've spent at home in England, for many years now; and the very fact that I am at home makes me aware how much of a wanderer I am. So as I lean back in my deep chair, with my pipe puffing and flaming like a pocket Stromboli, far scenes and strange people re-create themselves in the fire's red chasms, and Christmases upon snowy mountain-ranges and in burning deserts interweave like the warp and weft of a wilder tapestry than was ever woven in Bayeux or Brussels or Mantua.

I remember the Christmas that I spent in Andritsaena, a high cloud-hung city in the heart of Greece, an eagle's nest among cities. Century has succeeded century elsewhere in the world, but this city still lies ineradicable at the heart of the middle ages. It is forgotten. The world has passed it by. The ravens circle slowly over it. The sheep drift tirelessly along its barren pastures, which are so steep that often the snow holds no footing there.

And truly Greece is a notable country to be spending Christmas in (if fate has made a wanderer of you, and you must leave your deep chair empty at Christmastide and no fire flickering in your empty grate). Greece, I say, is a noble Christmas land, for there the stranger is received with a hospitality to which no other country in the world offers any parallel. To find anything resembling it, he must go back to the customs of the classical Greeks, the remote ancestors of these same people, to whom *Ksenia,* or guest-friendship, was the supreme virtue. In no city or village where I wandered during that frozen and marvelous Greek winter, was there not someone to take me in hand, give me food if I arrived hungry, give me drink whether I was thirsty or not, and make it his business to entertain me.

It was the owner of many sheep who took me in hand in Andritsaena, upon that exalted Christmas Day when I arrived there, and he wore a white kilted skirt and held a great shepherd's crook in his hand—though he tended no sheep that day in the icy meadows. And we both went over to the café upon a high terrace looking out upon the serried mountains that hurled the sunset fire from peak to snowy peak.

The great attraction of the Christmas festivities in Andritsaena was a Turkish minstrel, who wandered from village to village throughout Greece, and all the Balkans, singing to his guitar. (Alas, alas, he does not wander there now!)

Turks are not, as a rule, popular in Greece, but this wandering minstrel had won the affection of these people by espousing a Greek maiden and repudiating Mohammed. He had (as they expressed it with a confusion of b's and v's common to Greeks who speak English) "made a vaptize." And so this strange singer of the Babe new-born in a manger sat on a platform in the right-hand corner of the café, as bewhiskered a Turk as my patron was a blue-eyed Greek shepherd. And he had a great brazier of charcoal burning beside him, so that his fingers might not be numb when he came to strumming his guitar. And I being a guest, had a brazier of charcoal at my feet also and we were very warm and cozy in our café there, slung high above the mountains. Gradually the shepherds and goatherds filled the place. Night was upon us. The refracted snow shone obliquely and eerily against the windows. The landlord brought us each our favorite hooka from the nail where it hung upon the wall. Carefully we placed the lit cinder in the stuffed bowls of our pipes and drew the smoke through the bubbling water. Bottle after bottle of wine, the harsh resinated wine of Greece, was laid before us.

And strange song after song mourned that Turkish minstrel to his guitar. Now it was a Persian song of bulbuls and roses, making nightingales sing in our ears and roses bloom before our eyes, here on the snowy top of the world. And then he sang an Arab song of deserts and the sword. Then it was a pretty tale of Greek peasants courting; then a Kurdish mother crooning to her child.

Now the singer suspended the twanging of his strings, and crouching over the instrument, he lifted his face to the invisible roof and cried like a hurt beast. And then, very faintly, he touched the strings again, singing that there was joy, after all, in this dark, cold world, because once, in a southward land, a Child had been born in a manger. . . . Thus his heart warmed to the theme which those shepherds and goatherds were assembled there to celebrate. And so he sang in divers tongues the song of Christmas. Then someone whispered in his ear and the minstrel paused a moment, and he nodded. And suddenly, mysteriously, he brought forth words and a tune which had been familiar to me since I could remember. In this palace, in this fortress of the middle ages, engirdled by the mountains of classic Greece . . . it was not merely grotesque. It was not true.

But it was. And only when I made out that the heads of the peasants near me were all turned curiously in my direction did I realize that I, too, was singing to the twang of his guitar. And it was the carol of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wenceslas that he and I were singing together. Whether he learned it from some English youth captured in Gallipoli in the days before he had made his "vaptize," whether in his wanderings he had wandered so far as one of the English lands, I shall never know. But I know that never before and never since have I heard or sung a carol with so queer a tumult at the heart.

All this was some years ago. It was at the time of the Greek Easter that I returned to Andritsaena more recently. There was a great decapitating of scarlet-painted eggs in the café on the terrace when I took my place there again. Outside among the rocks the last purple crocuses were failing. Through acres upon acres of scarlet anemones the mountain flowed down into the valley. And as I sat there sipping my resinated wine, the owner of sheep who had so befriended me came into the café. He was wearing, not a pleated fustanella, but a pair of carefully pressed trousers. He carried, not a shepherd's crook, but a silver-topped ebony cane. Oh how elegant he had become!

And the music in the café that evening was not provided by any wandering Turkish minstrel, but by the four-valved wireless set mine host of the café had installed. *Anni labuntur,* oh my friend, the years slip by. And if my friends, the Greek peasants, shall not be so mindful of their folk-songs as of old time, it will do their spirits no irredeemable harm if the ether bears to them a choral from Handel and a rondo from Brahms.

So the Christmases of my wanderings re-create themselves, as I stare deep into the heart of my London fire, puffing tranquilly at my pipe in the warm knowledge that nothing short of earthquake or tidal wave can dislodge me from my chair.

I recall a Christmas eve in a snowed-up Alpine valley; and all the peasants gathered together in the Inn of the Golden Star. I recall how the lads slapped their bronzed, bare knees, how they seized their maidens and twirled them to the roof, what gallons of *Schnapps* they consumed, and what infinite piping-hot Atlantic cables of sausage they devoured. And I knew that, lustily though they sang and deep though their potations were, when the time of the Christmas midnight Mass approached, a great silence and a great awe fell upon these people. I knew that not a few of them, some minutes before midnight, would go down upon their knees among the cattle in the cattle sheds, because of their belief that at midnight the cows go down upon their knees and utter words like human words, in memory of a great privilege which was once conferred on them.

I recall the peasant family with whom I lodged that exquisite Christmastide; how when they had eaten the last dumpling, and every candle on the Christmas tree had burned down to its clip and no wine was left in the flasks—I recall how the bells rang for the midnight Mass. Very faint and clear, even now over all the London roofs, the thin music of the bells wavers like a flock of birds. And so the family took in hand the pine torches for the journey to the shining church on the hill, but before they set forth, the mother put down a basin of milk on a ledge before a picture of the Holy Family, and all the others ringed the basin round with their spoons; for they were certain that one of them would find his spoon moved out of its place, and he or she would have luck till Christmas came again, for Mary had in her grace fed her Child with it.

And the flames in my fire leap and slide, and my mind takes a leap over Alps and Apennines, to a traced Mediterranean island. I behold the brightly garbed bands of masqueraders who go serenading the joyous time from house to house, in Capri, under the cypresses that burn like tall torches. What discord of instruments, what coughing of callow voices, what quiring of shrill voices—and how all those sounds cohere into rapture in the odorous air!

And now the phantasmagoria of the fire impels me to recall a far different Christmastide . . . this was in New England, only last year. It was in the home of one of the great Puritan families, and it seemed to me that those sturdy men and those gracious women had preserved the tradition of the English Christmas as intact as any English folk I know. How far removed we were from the hectic fever of New York, with its blazing skyscrapers climbing hand over fist into heaven! How far removed we were from the Negro cabarets in Harlem, where the eyeballs of the jazz band roll like the eyeballs of man-slayers in the steamy heart of the midmost African jungle!

Here in this hospitable New England home all was peace and kindliness—from the enormous laden Christmas tree that took the center of the shining and paneled dining-room, to the piano which was reflected like an island in that sea of polished wood! And in the vast kitchen a sheep was roasted whole in the mediaeval fashion, that all this clan might feast and all their dependents and work-folk. There was only one touch of the modern world in all this Yuletide bravery. This was the loud speaker concealed cunningly in the fir tree so that the carols relayed from New York sounded like the tree itself articulate. And when the wireless music drew to an end, we felt that we might do almost as well ourselves. So the clan gathered about the piano and sang carols, and I stood outside myself and gazed on these people, and the picture went further back than the pages of Nathaniel Hawthorne; it went back even to the heart of England, to the joyful pages of Chaucer.

It was lovely—but it was not my own place. They were kindly, but not my own people. I ram the tobacco deeper down into my pipe. I stretch a foot lazily toward the logs on my fire and kick them up into a more cheerful blaze. I shall go awandering in the high tide of summer henceforth. It is a grand thing to be a home-keeping man when Christmas comes, and snow, and puddings as rich as heaven, and the cunning mistletoe. . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Places and Persons

IMPRESSIONS OF OBERAMMERGAU

By RICHARD LINN EDSALL

WHEN I went to Oberammergau this summer, I took a bus from Lucerne, full of high expectations of Swiss and German scenery. Alas! it rained hard all day, and we saw hardly anything—a large ancient monastery, a mediaeval castle in the hills, and some low mountains, were the only sights of any moment, and even they were blurred. Which made Oberammergau, once I arrived and the rain vanished, all the more welcome in its beauty.

This little town of 2,000 rests quietly against the foothills of the Tyrolean Alps, peaked and rugged, yet green and inviting. The buildings are of white plaster or else little scalloped shingles, with steep roofs, overhanging eaves, plentiful flowers and elaborate carved and painted decorations. In them a picturesque Old World air mingles with a fresh cleanness that seems altogether of today, unlike the unmistakable antiquity of French provincial towns. And the people are the friendliest, most cheerful, most at peace with the world, of any I have come across. Degraded poverty, beggars, drunkenness, artificial gaiety, simply cannot be found. All these remarks could be made of any little Swiss or Bavarian town's houses and inhabitants, but of no other regions I know.

The first obvious uniqueness of Oberammergau in a play year is the men. All of them have let their hair and beards flourish for about a year, with truly astonishing results. To see obvious saints and biblical characters drinking in a tavern, have them carry your bag and sell you post-cards, is at first a bit startling, yet soon appealing, and typically Catholic in pervading prosaic daily life with holy things. The second point wherein Oberammergau differs from other little towns nearby is in the incredible number of stores selling post-cards, texts of the play, knickknacks, statuary, pottery, all kinds of things sacred and profane—which makes you feel as if you were in a tourist-infested city.

Of course most of their carvings and statues are religious, and few are show-pieces, though quite a number are of a high order. There is a school of carving in the town. The majority of the work is in modified Renaissance style, some in Gothic traditions, and some surprisingly simplified and formalized with little attention to naturalism, truly modern in no small degree. Amusing combinations can be found—one window displayed texts of the play beside recent Tauchnitz books, including Elinor Glyn's "Three Weeks," whose one-time scandalous reputation was naturally quite unknown to these pious Germans. And the charges for the very simple accommodations and food were above normal. English, at least a minimum for business, is almost universal. All these facts give a large basis to the widespread accusation that the play has become commercialized. But one must remember that this source of income comes only once in ten years, and has to cover the cost of the theatre, costumes, orchestral instruments, town improvements, the whole support of the town for many months, and much of its support at other times. Even at that, an old man told me they were thinking of having a play year in 1934, the three-hundredth anniversary of the first performance, but did not yet know whether they could afford to, since Cook's, the American Express and the other agencies took such large commissions, and the government laid such burdensome taxes.

The audience was a surprise to me—a considerable majority were Germans, others of course from everywhere. In my bus were some Australians, and in the house with me (Judas's) four American Poles studying in a Swiss university!

The theatre building is a bare unattractive structure, a piece of engineering that fulfills the requirements, but the stage itself is a work of art—graceful lines, simple design and decoration, constructed ideally for a play in which scenes move without intermission indoors and out, from one place to another, with large crowds sweeping across. At the center of the rear is an inner stage, where all interior scenes (and some others, such as the Agony, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension) are played. From this, arches join another building on each side, nearer the audience. Under these arches run the streets of Jerusalem, for entrance and exit. The side buildings are fine compositions of columns, doorways and curving steps—one is used for the house of Annas, the other for the house of Pilate. They in turn have other arches curving out to the front corners of the stage—under these arches the chorus comes in and goes out. And there is a large open space in front of the inner stage and side buildings. With all this space, the director obtained some grand effects: the entry into Jerusalem was seen first afar off through the inner stage, then heard approaching, and finally appeared through one of the arched streets; Christ was dragged endlessly before our eyes, from Annas's house to the Sanhedrim (inner stage), to Pilate's house, to Herod (again inner stage), and back to Pilate; and what to my mind was the most extraordinary scene in the play, when the priests and money-changers went out to arouse the crowd and returned with groups from four different directions, one through each street and two through the inner stage, piling up and up a howling blood-thirsty, arm-waving mob. Never have I seen anything so convincing and terrifying.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The part of the play for which I was least prepared was the group of over twenty prophetic Old Testament tableaux, periodically breaking the action of the Passion. Before each tableau the chorus would enter, the Prologuist (Anton Lang) would explain the parallel between the Old Testament incident and the incident of the Passion it typified; then the chorus would sing a vivid description of the two incidents, meanwhile drawing to the sides; and the curtain would go up on a "living statue" picture of the Old Testament scene. These frozen pictures were most appropriate, as they were really pictures, not parts, of the main action (for instance, Isaac's bearing the wood for the sacrifice himself was compared to Christ's bearing His cross). Then the curtain would go down, the chorus stretch again across the stage, and file slowly out.

The music was very good, though written (about a hundred years ago) by a little-known native. I had read that it was too baroque, too much influenced by Mozart, to be fitting—on the contrary it was simple, stately, strong, quite in harmony with the spirit of the production. At first I was inclined to think the play would have been better as continuous action, but decided there were three advantages to the chorus and tableaux—they broke the tremendous emotional strain, which would have been unendurable if uninterrupted; they filled out the happenings of the moment with the whole Jewish tradition, which actually played so important a part in Christ's history, and has been inseparably bound up with Christian thought about it ever since; finally, they made the form of the play more inclusive, almost universal, combining the Greek chorus with modern direct action, having them meet in a mediaeval mystery play.

In those scenes where any theatrical trickery would have been unbearable, which yet seemed impossible to make simple and real, this play achieved the incredible. Nothing could be more true and deeply moving than the Last Supper, Agony in the Garden, scourging, crowning with thorns, carrying of the cross, and Crucifixion, which I had not been able to imagine done with conviction and reverence in a theatre. Unfortunately the Resurrection and Ascension were marred by obvious stage devices, especially the Ascension.

As for the portrayals by the main actors, they were naturally not all masterpieces. The Christ of Alois Lang was sturdy and manly, a great relief after the sickly pictures and poems current in the last century, but not gentle enough, not enough touched by love and suffering. Sad to say, Saint John did not similarly differ from the usual soft, effeminate pictures. In Saint Peter I missed a tempestuousness of love and protestations, of anger and repentance, but his being driven into a moral corner by jeering and threats, his justifiably mounting fear and confusions, were rounder with life than I had ever conceived them. Mary and the Magdalene were very adequate. Herod was not enough the sodden, materialistic pleasure-seeker, too much a mere old fool. Caiaphas and Annas were excellent; Pilate really superb—never could there be a better portrayal of his sympathy, insight, continued attempts to do right, and the gradual crumbling of his resolves under the impact of fear. In the opinion of everyone, Judas was the best of all—he also was more filled with humanity than in the conventional portrayals, had more in common with ordinary men, less utter depravity; his doubts, temptation, awakening, regrets, frantic attempts to avert the death of Christ, persisting love of his Master, and blank, wild despair, were all true, and not a caricature of deviltry.

But all this is irrelevant to the play as a whole, in which the ability of the leading players mattered little. The great thing was the sweep of it all, the tremendous united work of 685 actors, out of a town of 2,000 (and no one not born there may take part)—every one of them permeated and fired by the one spirit of whole-heartedly bringing the Passion to life, in all its humanity and reality, in its vast strength and dignity. This could only be achieved by a community held up by fine ancient traditions, by vigorous everyday piety, by widespread artistic training, by simple, natural, quiet life, taken in with every breath from infancy. In the theatre it was ridiculous to think of the play as commercialized, one could only be overwhelmed and swept away by its greatness.

Where I Took Hold of Life

Wild roses have reclaimed the field
  Where I took hold of life
And guided my first plow along
  Like a silver knife.

The brown thrush sings without a break
  Where I turned to a man
And stepped out straight into the world
  Behind a lurching span.

The clay was too uneven there
  For him my father hired
To go with reins looped on his neck
  And plow as he desired.

"Suppose you hold the handles, son,
  And try to keep her straight."
The two halves of the universe
  Rolled back and made a gate.

And I went through with desperate
  Bare toes that scored the clay;
No woman yet has made my heart
  Beat as it beat that day.

When I turned at last and saw
  My furrow running true,
My head was higher by a hand,
  So fast my thigh-bones grew.

The wild rose and the thrush may take
  Their field and welcome now;
It made its man, and it may rest
  Forever from the plow.

ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EUROPE'S WINDIEST CORNER

By GEORGE N. SHUSTER

DURING the past month Marshal Pilsudski decided to endow the Parliament of his country with a majority favorable unto himself. The result was not everything he may have hoped for, but corresponded so nearly with preordained figures that the Dictator of Warsaw can be snubbed by no mathematician. Nor by any despiser of democracy. It is curious that the electoral methods employed—sending leaders of opposition parties to jail, declaring certain lists illegal, counting the ballots in advance—were apparently supposed to go unobserved by the outside world. If one can credit not a few usually candid sources of information, the election was designed to prove not merely that all Poland was for Pilsudski but also that all Poland was for Poland. Of course the world has winked first with one eye and then with the other. Nevertheless the fact that neither assertion will hold water constitutes a situation which is perhaps the most dangerous moment in the exceedingly troubled Europe of today.

In order to understand what is involved, the reader is invited to take his station at the windiest corner of the Continent: there where the Vistula, flowing northwest from Warsaw, suddenly bends at Bromberg and rushes on toward Dantzig. Only with the greatest difficulty can one realize that this placid landscape, protected against the river by dikes once built by Dutch Mennonites in the fashion of their country, is the very center of a vehement, epoch-making political struggle which may—I am almost prepared to say must—lead to war. Here all the ambitions of the new Poland converge. Here, too, the German determination to rebuild a fatherland shattered by a disastrous peace places and will place every ounce of its energy. During the past weeks I have gone over almost every mile of this territory and, beyond that, far into the several hinterlands. Of course I have not been a pioneer. One after another, journalists and political observers are making this trip, rubbing their eyes, shaking their heads and wondering. I shall try to describe the scene objectively, without drawing conclusions or taking sides.

This region is, first of all, a concrete expression of what the future of Europe looked like to those who drew up the Treaty of Versailles ten years ago. The victorious powers were then moved by the twin purposes of curbing (if possible dismembering) Germany and creating nationalistic states according to the Wilsonian ideal. Both found an outlet in the Vistula country. Here Poland was given the first of its three "corridors," when, without any pretense at finding out the will of the inhabitants, a region shaped something like a jagged wedge was taken from between the two Prussias and deeded over to Warsaw. The reasons advanced to support this step were several, the only one which will now hold water being that Polish commerce needed access to the sea. But in 1920 the strip of sandy Dantzig Bay coast looked precious little like Liverpool or Amsterdam. Accordingly the treaty makers decided to isolate the city of Dantzig, which now became a political anomaly without a parallel in human history—a city state the status of which no one knew and the exact privileges and duties of which have not been determined even yet. Meanwhile the "corridor" took on other interesting aspects. Almost every mile of the boundary as now traced takes advantage of strategic points, many of which have since been developed. Here the line suddenly dips in three or four hundred yards to absorb a railroad bridge (Dirschau), or leaps across the river to embrace five villages and a hill, or even bends elastically to draw in dikes which if pulled down might engulf a whole region. Elsewhere the Polish officials have disregarded industrial assets and have torn up railroads and pulled down bridges where these might prove unsalutary in some hypothetical war. The results are often tragically comic. Here a town has been separated from its railroad station; there a farmer awoke to discover that his house was in one country and his field in another, so that a dozen customs officers were needed to supervise every harvest; and here again a factory is left stranded in Poland while the workers who serve it dwell in Germany.

The social effects of this extraordinary political creation are virtually catastrophic. Statistics indicate that nearly one million human beings have in one manner or another been squeezed out of the "corridor" country, the economic facilities and land values of which have been battered fearfully. What has been done, however, cannot now easily be undone. There remain the present dangers and distresses. In exchange for peaceable access to the sea and amicable relations with other countries, the Polish people—lovable, religious, hard-working—have been burdened with a reality that will not stand the test of history. To begin with, all traffic which passes from East Prussia and Dantzig to the German Reich must be subjected to a tangle of legal customs and railway manipulation which leave the American visitor dumbfounded. To go from one part of Germany to the other may involve a congeries of baggage inspections and passports reading almost as long as the thirty miles covered. A sizable fraction of all the activities of the League of Nations has been devoted to regulating this one problem. Secondly, the strategic disadvantage of the "corridor" necessitates a heavy concentration of troops in the region. There are more Polish militia in this one domain than there are soldiers in the United States army. It is a strong faith in universal peace which can survive a trip

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through this chaotic territory. Finally, one must reckon with the irritation which all this barricading of unnatural frontiers engenders in the German, who may occasionally suspect evil intent where none exists. To give one example. A Polish visa is required of all travelers to Dantzig excepting those who go by boat. But few things in this world are harder for a German to get than such a visa, owing to the documentation and signatures required. In Berlin one may wait for hours at the consulate while a long defile wrestles with sundry officials as well supplied with questions as a small boy.

But enough of these little pieces of flint which give rise to a ceaseless conflagration of emotions. In a hundred years, granted a more rational handling of the problem, they might all wear themselves smooth. Of far greater importance is the industrial situation which has grown out of the dispositions made by the Treaty of Versailles and extended by subsequent international conferences held primarily under French auspices. Here we must pause for a moment and remember that there is a second Polish "corridor" lodged between Russia and Lithuania. Ostensibly the prize here awarded was the city of Wilna, which the propagandists of 1920 considered Polish. Nevertheless a second glance at the map will show that something of much greater moment was involved. Prior to the war, the chief lines of railroad communication between Russian and eastern Germany ran through Wilna and Kowne to Tilsit and Koenigsberg. Today Poland has control of all these at Wilna; and its refusal to allow traffic to pass under normal conditions has forced the Germans to establish a circuitous and costly route farther to the north. In addition the River Memel, once an artery of trade in wood, has to every intent and purpose been closed. We may conclude, therefore, and say that Poland holds the key to Russian trade with the Western world.

Add the two "corridors" and you have the great industrial dream of modern Poland. It has severed East Prussia from the Reich to an extent which equals at least 30 percent of ordinary transportation effectiveness. Dantzig has been enclosed in a still tighter compartment, to which I shall return in a moment. Just now it is most important to note that East Prussia has likewise been divorced from the Eurasian hinterland. Though trade with Russia is of minor importance at present, the future of the Continent depends to a large extent upon the nature of that trade and upon the routes which it decides to follow. Therefore the region around Koenigsberg is an agrarian and industrial isle from which only a few shaky boats are now permitted to reach mainland. If the scheme hatched in Warsaw achieves permanent success, the twin "corridors" will become monopolistic highways. Of course a glance at the map will show that very considerable difficulties are involved. The distance from Wilna to Dantzig by rail is almost twice as great as the distance from Wilna to Koenigsberg. By way of compensation the Polish state has fixed traffic rates so incredibly low that one is probably justified in assuming operation at a loss.

Even here, however, we have not reached the end of the story. Dantzig is a fabulously beautiful city. Taking its rise under the Teutonic Knights who once Christianized eastern Europe and bequeathed to the modern world a hundred beautiful churches, Dantzig as a Hanseatic town absorbed the rich culture of the Netherland Renaissance and maintained close relations with England during more than two hundred years. Even today these old streets, which retain to a marvelous degree their ancient charm, testify to riches and a piety unique in the north of Europe. But Dantzig is also a large and modern city with a harbor which centuries of engineering skill have developed into a model site for ocean traffic. Situated at the mouth of the Vistula and served by an excellent network of rail and water ways, it at once suggested itself as the ideal exit for Polish commerce. Much against the will of its inhabitants, who protested in one of the largest mass meetings ever held anywhere, the city was accordingly separated from the Reich and made to serve as the instrument of the newly formed nation to the south. Difficulties and trials of all sorts were involved, but Dantzig was consoled with the promise that wealth undreamed of would flow into the coffers of the city.

But though Poland used and continues to use Dantzig, its government almost immediately decided to construct a new harbor a few miles to the west on the site of the old fishing village of Gdynia (the German Gdingen). During the past six years a truly marvelous task has been accomplished here on foundations as crude as mother nature could make them. At present the place looks quite like an American oil town, with blocked out parcels of land awaiting the speculator with money, clusters of ugly, brand-new buildings along streets which churn themselves into thick mud after a rain, the cultural accessories of the "boom burg." Nevertheless the harbor is a remarkable achievement, into the accomplishment of which millions of dollars and floods of energy have gone. Here already are great industrial wharves, ports of embarkation for Polish emigrants, and the first units of the Polish navy. And the point most worthy of note is this: every ship which docks at Gdynia means a loss for Dantzig, every addition made to this harbor is a blow to the other.

Behind Gdynia still another Polish project—possibly the most ambitious of all—invites the meditative observer. A new railroad running straight south from the harbor to the third "corridor" (the portion of Silesia which was given to Poland at Versailles) is now in partial operation. When completed it will form the central artery of all Polish trade and will make a strong bid for Czechoslovakian commerce, now routed to a great extent over the free harbor of Hamburg. Here again transportation rates will play an important part. If the present mercantile politics of the Warsaw government can survive depression and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the demands of a working population for a higher standard of living, there is no apparent reason why the great plan should not carry through. Unless . . . something happens . . . Poland, with France in the distance holding the purse strings and the military commando, may gather into its hands the reins which control the transportation steeds upon which a great part of Europe depends.

I come back to the Vistula and stand at a place from which one can see the towers of Marienburg, supreme monument to those stupendous Knights whose Madonnas are works of fervor and art worth going a thousand miles to see. This unbelievably vast castle has been accepted by every German of the east as a pledge of eternal discontent; and week after week groups of young people pass through the somber crypt where the Grand Knights lie buried in simple pomp, pass and draw deep breaths and find something in their hearts not noticed there before. And along the road to the north there comes a little group of Polish horsemen, military emblems of a country whose fate it is not to dream of an expanding and imperial Poland, but to dream of that in a narrow continent where room to grow must be fought for inch by inch. By no means all the Poles are addicted to this dream. For many, a contented state living within the boundaries assigned by historical events to their people and seeking comradeship with other Christian lands seems the only sane ideal. For others, minorities absorbed into the new Poland and compelled to suffer all that chauvinistic enmity can impose, the first necessity is domestic peace and liberality. But for the moment these thoughtful lesser groups are submerged under a great tide of possibly blind patriotism, just as in Germany the pacifists of 1920 are slowly retreating before the attack of a new generation that longs to earn the title of avenger. Especially difficult is the situation of the Catholic Church. I say with no hesitation that the most determined men on both sides of this quarrel are representatives of the one society which has worked during the past half-century for international conciliation.

There I leave the matter, realizing that history will arrive at different conclusions than any spectator can suggest. Nevertheless this much should be said: any impartial American who examined the scene and weighed the elements which comprise it would in all probability feel that the settlement of Germany's eastern boundary made at Versailles expressed the hates and petty ambitions of a moment, not the permanent rights and needs of European civilization. Personally I feel that the social, historical and industrial facts would confirm the view of this hypothetical American. That, however, is no great matter. What counts is that the future of Europe, peace or war, will in all likelihood be decided on this ground. It is not yet too late for public opinion to remember that a stitch in time saves nine.

DECEMBER

By SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

THE EARTH has gone back to the beginning. Her secrets are locked up. The year's tale is told. She lies at the end of the months as she lay at the beginning—still and frozen, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of frost and snow. The beginning and the ending are the same.

There seems to be neither growth nor change nor life in the iron-hard soil, powdered here and there with snow, in the bare hedges and the barren woods, in the ponds that are black under their bondage of ice. Even the sun in the heavens stands still at his winter solstice. The glory and bravery of summer are almost unimaginable—it is hard to remember the changes of the months—the kindling gleam of February, the brightness of the April garden, the whiteness of the May-day hedgerow, the calm, starlit seas of August, the fruitful, golden trees of September. All have ended as they began, in this darkness and stillness. The year's tale is told, and the beginning and the ending are the same.

* * * *

The months end as they began—with the Child. In December we meet the Child again, the Child of January, the Child who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord. In this Child the Christian faith begins and ends. All the doctrines of councils, all the learning of doctors, all the disputations of scholars, all the splendor of creeds, have their beginning and ending in the Child born of the Virgin Mary. The Christian Gospel is simply the Gospel of the Incarnation—of the New Life born of a Virgin into the world, redeeming man from his bondage to the law which was added because of transgressions—making him a citizen of a new and heavenly nature—redeeming through him the rest of creation, of which he was first appointed a mediator, so that there shall be in eternity not only a new heaven but a new earth—an earth set free from the bondage of sin that held her in time, her processes redeemed for mercy, her creatures redeemed for joy.

It is this and nothing less than this that the New Life comes to accomplish—the first life having been corrupted by the enemy, and mankind having failed to fulfil his appointed purpose of restorer and healer. By virtue of the Incarnation of the Son of God, there is now a new power working in the world toward its atonement with its Maker. The Divine Humanity of Our Lord, both superseding and containing ours, has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

already fulfilled the purposes of God for us, and through it we have union with God and are accounted His obedient sons, with power to coöperate in His work.

The New Life works through the old. It uses matter in the way it was originally intended, as the vehicle and manifestation of spirit. Through Christ even the earth knows the glory of the resurrection of her body. As long ago water gave birth to life, so now water is made the vehicle of the new birth and supernatural life: "Therefore do I hallow thee, O thou gift of water," says the priest at the blessing of the font on Holy Saturday, "by God the faithful, by God the holy, by God Who in the beginning by His word divided the land from thee, by Whose Spirit the waters were overshadowed." As bread and wine have been the bodily food of man, giving strength and joy to his flesh, preserving his body in life, so now they are made his spiritual food, giving strength and joy to his soul, preserving his body and soul unto everlasting life. By natural modes they have been assimilated by man's body and made a part of his humanity, and now by spiritual modes they are assimilated by God and made a part of His Divine Humanity. "Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee, and grant that we receiving these Thy creatures of bread and wine according to Thy Son Our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution . . . may be partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood."

The sacraments go down to the very roots of creation—they go further down than our humanity, though our humanity is the means by which they descend, thus restoring it to its original mediatory purpose. Water, bread and wine—the elements and our own uses of the elements, inorganic and organic nature—are made the vehicles of supernatural life. Thus we are brought into a wonderful and mystical union between the earth and ourselves and the Divine. Instead of remaining a creation at issue and enmity with itself and separated from God, we become a creation working together in mutual love and coöperation in union with God. Thus is the atonement wrought between God and man and the earth.

For our redemption is not only nearer but wider than we believed, and includes not only humanity but the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together. . . . It is not only in poetry but in truth that the priest bids nature join in his thanksgiving after every Mass: "Let us sing the song of the three children which they sang when they blessed the Lord in the furnace of fire." And the song of the three holy children, redeemed from the furnace, is also the song of earth redeemed: "O let the earth bless the Lord, yea let it praise Him and magnify Him forever. . . . O ye mountains and hills, bless ye the Lord. . . . O all ye green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord. . . . O ye wells, bless ye the Lord. . . . O ye seas and floods . . . O all ye fowls of the air . . . O all ye beasts and cattle—join today with the angels and with the priests of the Lord, with the servants of His sanctuary and the spirits and souls of the righteous, with all holy and humble men of heart, in singing the song of our redemption which we sing in the midst of the furnace of fire, praising and magnifying Him forever."

"The angel of the Lord came down into the oven and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven; and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind. Then the three, as out of one mouth praised, glorified and blessed God in the furnace, saying: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and to be praised and exalted above all forever."

The heart of the burning fiery furnace has become Joseph of Arimathea's garden—the garden of the new earth and of the new spring, the blessed country where all the works of the Lord praise the Lord, the home of the children of men, of the holy souls and of the angels, where the risen Christ stands between the sun and moon, and greets the Church of His new creation with "Peace be unto you."

THE BESETTING VIRTURE

By EUPHEMIA VAN RENSSELAER WYATT

IN HIS preface to "Candida," says Mr. Shaw: "There is no doubt but that society is founded on intolerance"; but he wrote that in the nineties. Twentieth-century society, and particularly Society with a capital, is not intolerant. The lesser vices still warrant contempt but to question the larger moral lapses of one's neighbor stamps one as a Puritan. A man would be suspended from his club for sequestering a member's watch but rarely for purloining his neighbor's wife. While pickpockets lack status, an outstanding murderer becomes the center of awesome admiration, and murderesses receive not only condolence and flowers but also offers of new victims and husbands.

To the summer session of Columbia University come many of the faculties of the smaller colleges. Not long ago in that summer session, in a course devoted to the short story, one of the members conceived a plot which hinged upon the sinfulness of the heroine. It was an unusual and very excellent plot, but so essential was it that the most casual reader be convinced of the venal quality of the protagonist that the author appealed to the class for suggestions.

"I desire a sin," said she, "so universal, so immediate and so ample that anyone commencing this story will be forced to exclaim, 'By Jove, she was a sinner!' "

The author paused expectant. There arose a clamor of discussion which sifted itself down to this significant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fact, that in that group of twenty-five or more intelligent and serious adults none could agree on any one act sufficiently execrable to stamp its agent as a sinner. In short, to that tolerant, open-minded, unconventional circle, sin had ceased to exist.

One of our leading playwrights once wrote a play which opened in a New York cabaret and traveled a sordid path to the Lido. In the cabaret the company danced to a jazzed version of Gounod's "Ave Maria." The play failed without arousing much comment. Those to whom it appealed praised it whole-heartedly. One auditor who was sufficiently disturbed to write to the author received the following unexpected reply:

> I take a certain comfort in your protest about the use of the "Ave Maria" as a foxtrot in the first act of my play. I have never heard any hymn jazzed in any American restaurant or, for that matter, anywhere else. I wanted to make an abstraction of the cheapness of Broadway and I made my "Ave Maria" foxtrot out of whole cloth. I entirely agree with you that it is in the worst of taste, and I am comforted because you are the first person who has suspected that any of the consummate vulgarity of that act of that play is anything but quite all right.

It is difficult indeed to determine upon the proper procedure when an audience refuses to be shocked. Having trained their public to a state of sublime tolerance, the realists find their pupils now lack discrimination. Should we proceed much closer to the innocuity of total toleration, there is one form of artistic expression that must certainly wither, and that is the drama. Galsworthy has said that the source and wellspring of dramatic material is original sin. Its crux is the struggle of the individual or the group toward some very definite point; its emotional tension is the antithesis of that spiritual equilibrium or indifferentism which connotes a state of tolerance. A modern Hamlet would explain to Horatio that his uncle could not have been expected to repress his libido. That it verged on incest merely brought it in closer harmony to the latest theories of the subconscious. Clytemnestras, nowadays, never slay their Agamemnons; they prefer to levy alimony. Our young Electras and Oresteses, if they resent home conditions, find no sympathetic chorus for their smarts but divide their holidays between their parents. When sin as a concept is quite obsolete, the dramatist had best lay aside his quill.

Generalities are grand but unemotional. A humanitarian is not dramatically valuable. A Wilberforce, a Howard or a Florence Nightingale lack the flaming qualities of a Juliet, a Joan or a Loyola. Life without personal intensity must assume the uniformity of a landscape without shadows. Of course there are many modern painters who prefer to see the world that way. While rejoicing at the increasing broad-mindedness about us, one cannot refrain from recalling the brilliant high lights and dark shades possessed by a more narrow generation, who also seemed to display more of those minor inconsistencies on which the comedies of human life function. We recall a nineteenth-century Socialist who lived a pure Tolstoian existence on his wife's large country place. His diet consisted of mushrooms and other redolent legumes, prepared by an excellent cook and, having sacrificed a diplomatic career to his principles, he lectured enthusiastically on vegetarianism and a return to Christian Communism. But the lapse that most readily aroused his usually pleasant temper was when one of his household failed to dress for dinner.

The pacifism preached by Tolstoi, the non-resistance or super-tolerance that he considered so fundamental a part of Christianity, has certainly not been the distinguishing mark of Christians throughout the centuries. Though Christ has promised the earth to the meek, not many have sought in that manner their heritage. The Quakers command respect but remain a minority. At the Council of Nicaea, Nicholas, the venerable Bishop of Myra, who had suffered for his faith during the last persecution, smote with his crippled hands the face of Arius when Arius insulted the Trinity. Are there many of us so thoroughly meek as to blush at the ardent loyalty contained in that old and mutilated body? Where shall the tenuous line be drawn between intolerance and integrity? Between tolerance and turpitude?

Was it only broad-mindedness when, after hearing of the elopement of her twelve-year-old daughter, a mother of my acquaintance exclaimed: "Well, at any rate it has saved me one wedding breakfast! She will undoubtedly have others."

"Virginal" is no longer a generally accepted adjective for maidenhood. An irreproachable younger matron when asked her opinion of "smirched heroines" disagreed with the definition. A slip, she claimed, did not constitute a fall. "The reaction against a New England conscience," explained her husband. Yet Strindberg, the melancholy apostle of individualism, at the close of his life denounced his former principles of moral tolerance:

> I set free the women, with the result that honest women were the equals of prostitutes and turned against their deliverers to strike him with their broken chains. I wanted to set free the young from the torments of conscience and from madness; and youth, which has sunk into vice and crime, accuses me of being a Cataline.

In the course of his travels in India, Keyserling came upon a solitary Englishman camping in a snake-infested ruin in the middle of the jungle. The Englishman explained that he was interested in cobras and that as he knew how to mind his own business, they did him no harm. Meditating upon the uncouth encounter, the philosopher remembered that lunatics, as well as serpents, live peaceably if unmolested, and readily conform to the rules of an asylum once they learn that order is conducive to their own comfort. Just so the traffic of the outside world halts at the policeman's whistle. Law is a luxurious necessity. Emerson de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clared that all nature is a discipline; her secrets being yielded only to those who have learned at her school. Nor should the man who has learned patience of the elements and calm of the heavens be the stuff for a fanatic. The Arabians, who seem to refute this theory, are not nature's scholars but her slaves; being to that extent in savagery that they do not seek to overcome natural laws but are hot or cold, starved or nourished, as nature ordains. Their hospitality is as uncontrolled as their hate, for the truly civilized are wise enough to temper even their virtues.

According to Coleridge:

> The ardor of undisciplined benevolence seduces us into malignity; and whenever our hearts are warm and our objects great and excellent, intolerance is the sin that does most easily beset us.

Perhaps he has thus explained better than anyone the pitfall of so much professed Christianity. Who, as a child, has not felt the aggressiveness distilled from the discomforts of goodness? Who so ready to chastise the truant as the boy who has been to Sunday School? Those who are overlavish in giving are the most exacting of gratitude. We once knew a hostess so querulous of her own reputation for hospitality that she crossed from her lists anyone who refused, even with the most sincere regrets, two consecutive invitations from her.

The benevolent notion of sharing our ideals with our neighbor may degenerate into irritation, should he refuse to be enlightened. Nothing can excel in bitterness the spirit of civil or religious wars, for they are rooted in self-righteousness. The intolerance of pious men then becomes a platitude.

Tolerance for our neighbor's ideals is certainly essential, but tolerance of his sins—accepting sin as a concept— is quite another matter. Our government has not been stigmatized as despotic in refusing to tolerate the plurality of Mormon wives. Polygamy may have been an honest ideal to the Mormon fathers, but it is structurally opposed to the basis of our society. Sin is also anti-social, as it is the individual's revolt against a comprehensive harmony. To tolerate murder is not described as "broad-minded" in legal terms, but as a criminal liability. If we find it easier to overlook certain moral lapses among our acquaintance, our consciences may sometimes remind us that in condoning an offense we may be actually an accessory. It is rather the fashion to brand fixed principles as narrow, but though admittedly we would not insult a gentle Buddhist for worshiping at his shrine, it does not seem unreasonable to assert that we believe our own faith to be better. If not, why profess it? Bolshevism acclaims a godless world. For all who are not atheists, the issue is too clear-cut for tolerance. The man without convictions is as unimportant as a swimming pool drained dry.

To maintain an intolerance of false principles untainted by self-righteousness, a tolerance that is never merely pusillanimous, it is necessary to remember that there is a distinction between tolerance and charity—a distinction sharply drawn in the New Testament. Christ respected the nobler among the Romans and the Samaritans and admitted them, pagans and heretics, into the circle of His friends. But He did not palliate the weakness of the woman at Jacob's well. Bluntly He said to her, "Thou sayest well thou hast no husband for thou hast had five." He, the Meek One, used violence to check the defilement of the Temple. Tolerant of ideals, He loved the sinner but always He hated the sin.

Now that sinners *per se* have become so unfashionable, charity as well as the drama must lose luster. But though Sweden has already abolished hell by legislature, sin may survive it.

THE OWNERS OF OWES

By HARVEY WICKHAM

"DID YOU ever hear the story of the twenty-six financiers of Owes?" asked Professor Ruble, expanding genially behind his magnificent grey-black beard.

We had discussed dessert, the business outlook, et cetera, and it was time for cigars. I shook my head. Ruble rumbled on:

"There were twenty-six of them, as I've said, and only one—we might call him A—had a dollar to his name."

"He deserves some distinction," I admitted.

"Well, they all lived in one block on the same side of the street, next-door neighbors to each other in the city of Owes itself. And when I say that A had a dollar, I mean just that. He lived at the head of the street."

"And next to him was B, and then C, and so on down to Z," I suggested.

"Exactly. And the total cash capital of the entire twenty-six was one dollar, and none of them owed any debts. Then, one day, B borrowed a dollar of his next-door neighbor, A. The total capital was still one dollar, but that was now offset by a dollar of debt. So, collectively, the whole twenty-six of them were worth just nothing."

"Hold on," I interrupted. "A had a solvent credit, and B had the dollar to pay him with."

"Not much, he didn't," Ruble insisted with a smile, "for C had come and borrowed it of him the minute he got it. Which made the total liquid assets one dollar as before. Indebtedness, two dollars. Net result, a dollar less than nothing. And so the borrowing kept on till the dollar got down to Z. Everybody but A now owed a dollar, or twenty-five dollars in all, and only Z had any money. Balance, twenty-four dollars in red."

"I begin to see," I said, "why you called it the city of Owes."

"Yes." Professor Ruble leaned back in his chair till it creaked. "The situation," he went on, "demanded drastic treatment. So Mr. A invited all the debtors to dinner. They all came, Z bringing the dollar with him. And A seated them in order about the table, B at his right, Z at his left.

" 'There is an indebtedness of twenty-five dollars to be liquidated, if this company wishes to avoid bankruptcy, ruin and disgrace,' said A, rising and addressing his guests. 'But if you will all do just as I say, I will show you how it may be managed without expense to anyone. Mr. Z, will you kindly give that dollar to Mr. Y? And now, Y, will you please give it to X?' "

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You were right, Ruble, in speaking of A, at least, as a financier," I put in. "For of course the coin passed from X up through the alphabet to B. And he gave it to A, who thus recovered what certainly at one time must have looked like a dead horse."

"That's what happened," the professor admitted. "But it didn't end there. For A arose once more and said:

"'Now I might loan this dollar directly to Z, who is the only one who is less favorably situated, financially speaking, than when we came together. But first I want you to observe that we have paid ourselves all off. In other words, we have raised twenty-five dollars without a cent's expense to anybody but Z, and this one dollar will put him where he was, leaving me with a solvent credit equal to his debt. Net gain, twenty-four dollars. Such being the case, why should I trouble to lend Z a dollar? Why not forget that paltry sum and raise another twenty-five, clean and fresh, to be divided equally between you all, without labor, risk, or any kind of difficulty whatever?'

"The host," Ruble interrupted himself at this point to remark, "could go no further for the moment on account of the chorus of *hows?* that went up."

"I can well believe it," I told him. "And I hereby add to it with a *how?* of my own."

"It was very simple," Ruble begged me to believe, after he had blown a couple of smoke-rings—a couple of owes, I suppose he would have called them. "Mr. A merely gave the dollar to the man next him—*gave,* not loaned—and he to the man next beyond, and so on until it was back in A's pocket. A trial balance taken then showed the following items: Original capital, one dollar—still intact. Indebtedness, none. Income per day per member of company, one dollar. Total income, twenty-six dollars. Total resources, twenty-seven dollars and no cents."

"No sense is right," I laughed, altering Professor Ruble's immediate environment so that he might quench his thirst without disturbing his equilibrium. "Just the ending that I expected."

"But it didn't end," he exclaimed, with indignation at my stupidity. "They passed the dollar around again and again, so that the income per capita increased from one per diem to two, to ten, to a hundred. Wine was brought, the feast prolonged into a banquet. Mr. A promised to hold a similar session every evening. So when the twenty-five others finally staggered homewards in the dawn it was with an assured daily income of some ten thousand dollars apiece. And a week had not passed before they began to buy property—real estate, hotels, mortgages, stocks, bonds, steamships, aldermen—"

"Wait!" I yelled. "What did they buy them with?"

"Their promissory notes, of course. A man with thirty thousand a month is worth three hundred and sixty thousand a year. He'll have no difficulty in getting credit."

"But what did they pay off their note with?"

"Why, with the income from their properties, their aldermen, steamships, hotels—"

"Enough! It seems sound."

"It was sound. They soon owned the whole country," said Professor Ruble, rising and filling his pockets with farewell cigars.

"Then why couldn't it be done, really?"

"It could, and often is."

"What, then, is the matter with things—in *this* country?"

The professor paused at the door, and answered solemnly: "A has just pocketed the dollar."

COMMUNICATIONS

FROM THE ABBÉ DIMNET

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editor: My name has been mentioned in the newspapers lately, in a connection different from the literary one to which I am accustomed. As the reports of the press have been rather inaccurate, you will do me a favor if you see your way to printing the following remarks intended to place the facts in their true perspective.

About a year ago, I signed a contract with a lecture bureau, under the management of Mr. W. C. Leigh, of New York City. All my engagements have been arranged for by this bureau. In April of this year, I was aked whether I would debate at the Mecca Temple with Dr. C. F. Potter on the question, "Is Religion Necessary?" I bought Dr. Potter's books, read them, and having read them, agreed to the debate. My intention was, of course, to limit myself to the historical and psychological point of view.

In September, vacationing in a far away village in northern France, I received a cable urging me to give an immediate answer to the suggestion: Would I debate with Mr. C. Darrow instead of with Dr. Potter? Mr. Darrow was only known to me by a few articles in the magazines, and I was chiefly interested in the subject of the debate. So I replied in the affirmative, only specifying that I wanted the subject to be the same, so that several weeks' reading would not be wasted.

On arriving in New York early in October, I wrote the Cardinal-Archbishop of New York a long letter, in which I submitted to His Eminence the line of argument I had planned to follow in the debate. This letter crossed a courteous one from the Chancellor, Monsignor Thomas S. Carroll, asking me to call at the chancery as a special permission was necessary for a debate on a religious question. At the chancery, Father McIntyre, in the absence of Monsignor Carroll, told me that permission could not be granted unless I applied to Rome. It has not been my habit to appeal to Rome from the decisions of my superiors, and I instantly canceled the engagement.

Such a procedure has nothing in it exceptionally meritorious and it sounds simple enough. In reality, it is not so simple as it seems, and involves multitudinous complications, even of a financial order.

The Discussion Guild, through which the debate had been arranged for with Mr. Leigh, then thought of a lecture which Father McIntyre, in our conversation, had said would be possible. I have been traveling constantly, from coast to coast and from the Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, since my arrival, and I heard of this in a letter. However, on November 17, happening to be in New York, I was called upon by Mr. Novik, the manager of the Discussion Guild, just when my taxi was at the door, five minutes before my departure for New Orleans. Mr. Novik said that the lecture would take place at the Community Church—an auditorium I had never heard of, and the name of which I did not even catch—and he added a few words about business. I asked about the acoustics of the hall and left in considerable hurry.

Ten days later, I was in Los Angeles when I received a wire from Monsignor Carroll saying that Article 1256 of the recently codified canon law barred the place where I was to lecture. I replied by air mail that if it were so, the auditorium should be changed, and the moment I was back in New York, it was changed, with not a little trouble, by Mr. Novik.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These two incidents have been, I fully realize, a source of annoyance not only to myself but to the chancery, to my agents and to Dr. Holmes, pastor of the Community Church. I can only regret it deeply, with the bare remark that in no case was the initiative on my side.

There have been in the press many misstatements which I cannot correct. But it will be useful to give a word of explanation, if you will kindly let me have the space, about the titles which are rightly given me: secular priest, abbé, and canon—about which many American Catholics do not seem to be clear.

A secular priest is a priest attached to a diocese and doing parish or school work under a bishop. Most American priests are like myself, seculars, in contradistinction to regular priests in religious orders, for instance, the Jesuits, Dominicans, etc.

The title abbé, once meaning an abbot, is now given by courtesy to most secular priests in France.

A canon is a member of a bishop's council. I was made a canon of the cathedral in which I was ordained—Cambrai cathedral—in 1919. The United States has, as yet, no canons. The corresponding title is monsignor. When I was appointed a canon, my archbishop let me go on with my literary work and with my duties as head of the English department of the famous Collège Stanislas, Paris. My superiors never gave me parish work proper to do, any more than such duties are given over here to priests, secular or regular, teaching in the Catholic universities.

Rev. Ernest Dimnet, Can. Cam.

SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENTS

Washington, D. C.

TO the Editor: Father Donnelly's conceding that "immaterial" may have more than one meaning closes the controversy so far as I am concerned. This was the main point I made, and a point which I believed capital, but which, in my opinion, both Father Donnelly and Neo-Scholasticus had ignored. My reason for believing the point to be capital is this:

It is evident that the fundamental cause of Neo-Scholasticus's error was a too narrow interpretation of the word "immaterial." Identifying "immaterial" with "spiritual," Neo-Scholasticus argued as follows: Whatever is immaterial is spiritual; but substance is immaterial; therefore, substance is spiritual. Now, I submit that a proper refutation of this argument would have involved, first, a distinction between the various meanings of the word "immaterial," and, second, a statement of the right and wrong predications of "immateriality" to substance; in other words, a distinction in the major and a contradistinction in the minor. Thereby would have been revealed at once the initial discrepancy of Neo-Scholasticus and the source of most of his further difficulties. But instead of this procedure, Father Donnelly appeared to me to concede the major (granting that whatever was immaterial was spiritual) and accordingly to deny the minor. It was because of this unusual procedure that I was prompted to say in my previous letter that "I strenuously object to his interpretation of the word 'immaterial.'" Regarding the adequacy of his refutation of Neo-Scholasticus on this point, it was not my immediate concern. Rather, it was merely a desire for a more proper presentation of what Father Donnelly has shown to be a strong case, to be accomplished by preserving some classical distinctions in and meanings of the word "immaterial," that moved me to take issue with my learned opponent.

Francis E. McMahon.

WAR CLOUDS OVER EUROPE

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editor: Just as I anticipated, Mr. George N. Shuster's articles appearing in The Commonweal, as a result of his European observations, are proving as interesting as they are convincing. I was particularly interested in his article, "War Clouds over Europe," wherein he informed his readers of the militaristic tendencies within the various countries today.

Of Czechoslovakia, Mr. Shuster informs us that the Czechs are rather proud of their regiments and boisterously applauded a recent review of officers and men as they marched past a given point. This group of officers and men, as Mr. Shuster says, had been originally designed as a Czech militia to keep the Slovak population under control. This would indicate that the Slovaks within the Czechoslovak Republic are an undisciplined revolutionary lot whose aim is to overthrow the new republic. But I feel safe to say that Mr. Shuster, whose first-hand observations abroad will enable him to learn the true conditions of the Slovak people of Czechoslovakia, will agree with me, when I say that the real purpose of the Czech militia in Slovakia is to enforce Czech supremacy over that of their (?) brothers, the Slovaks. "Czechoia" is a free country, but Slovakia still finds herself struggling under that same iron rule which held her down for over a thousand years.

Stephen J. Palickar.

ON FIRST SEEING AND HEARING G. K. C.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

TO the Editor: I have seen Gilbert Keith Chesterton. It was on the occasion of his debate with Cosmo Hamilton at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Although I had seen many pictures of my literary idol, none of them had prepared me for the real man.

The warm, human, simple, childlike nature and the beaming benevolence of his smile were so utterly charming, that I was immediately reminded of two quite disparate characters. I was reminded of my favorite uncle, now deceased, and I was reminded of Santa Claus. Let it not be inferred that this was any invidious comparison even though my uncle is dead and some people say there is no Santa Claus.

At first I was at a loss to justify these comparisons. My uncle was a small man and did not wear glasses. He did, however, have a white moustache and the same pleasant smile of G. K. C. Although Mr. Chesterton has an ample paunch in the manner of Santa Claus, I never saw a picture of Santa that showed him wearing spectacles. For that matter, Mr. Chesterton wears no beard.

As I thought more about it, I realized that my first instinctive impression in its childlike simplicity, was founded on a correct perception. My uncle was loved by every man, woman, child and dog in his town and he was the most natural democrat I ever knew. I have no personal knowledge of Mr. Chesterton's life, but I venture to think he is a beloved figure to his neighbors and I know that he is a true democrat in the best sense of that much abused term.

And as for the comparison with Santa Claus, what could be more apt? When we are depressed by the morbid maunderings of so many sad young men, do we not long for a "Santa Claus" writer who will bring us innocence, faith and good cheer? Who, I ask, of all modern writers, brings us more joyful gifts than our beloved G. K. C.? What finer tonic do we know than the sparkling wine of Chesterton's wit, effervescent and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

invigorating, the cleansing sanity of his shining reason and the grateful guffaws of so high-hearted a soul?

I loved the way G. K. C. chuckled at some telling thrust of Mr. Hamilton and the way he clapped his hands, as though he naughtily spanked one hand with the other.

I was surprised at his voice. I expected a deep, booming bass but instead I heard a tone that ranged from a high-pitched treble to a baritone. And this, too, was appropriate, for it was the combination of the voice of a child uttering childlike wisdom combined with the gravity of mellowed age.

Mr. Hamilton several times referred to Mr. Chesterton as a cherub and a teacher. G. K. C. expressed difficulty in reconciling the picture of a cherub and a teacher, but I think Cosmo Hamilton's appellations are apt, for is not Mr. Chesterton an angelic teacher?

When Mr. Chesterton suggested that the modern horror of the word "dogma" might be explained by the fear it engendered because of its onamatopoeic quality, I suppressed an undignified howl of glee as I mentally pictured a small boy running from a mad dog, shouting, "Dog, ma! Dog, ma!"

And when a casual remark about the New York subway was made by Mr. Hamilton, I was delighted at the way G. K. C. pounced upon it as a perfect allegory, comparing the modern world looking for its way with the stranger lost in the labyrinths of the subway.

W. D. Hennessy.

ALABAMA POINTS A MORAL

Durham, N. C.

TO the Editor: In your issue of November 12 you carry an editorial entitled "Alabama Points a Moral" that is unusually fine. Its spirit and tenor should meet a responsive note wherever read.

I sometimes speak through the press and I try to appeal to the coöperative and cohesive spirit of our people. We should always discourage the disruptive and dividing influences in our national life. Of course, we can't, if we would, standardize habits, customs and convictions; but over it all we may throw a mantle of tolerance and charity which will help us to live in peace and harmony.

John W. Hester.

WHAT IS CAPITALISM?

Washington, D. C.

TO the Editor: Please tell us, Mr. Editor, what is "capitalism"?

I know what the "Red menace" is for I have seen in Paris the remains of more than three hundred ecclesiastics, bishops, abbots, monks and priests, who were hacked to pieces, in cold blood, in the garden of the Carmelites by the Reds in 1789, one day's work.

Capitalism must be something pretty bad to bring about anything resembling this. But what is it? Strange that none of my friends can tell me anything about it. What use to warn us against it without telling us what it is?

Won't you please define for your readers what capitalism is?

Henry Binsse.

The title page and index for Volume XII of The Commonweal are now ready. These will be sent upon request. Arrangements have been made for binding Volume XII in leather or cloth. Information on binding will be given upon application to the offices of The Commonweal.

THE PLAY

By RICHARD DANA SKINNER

Overture

BY EVERY right, "Overture," written by William Bolitho, the late brilliant columnist of the New York *World*, should command a place among the most important events of the theatrical year. Before his untimely death, Mr. Bolitho had already made an extraordinary impression upon the reading public by his ability to command a wide audience without descending to the obvious tricks of the popularity seeker. His daily lines were compacted with cogent thoughts expressed in a language which, while clear and forceful, was of the sort generally supposed to be far above the heads of the masses of daily newspaper readers. What he was actually doing, of course, was merely proving once more the old truth that the average intelligence is far above the rating generally given to it by supposedly intelligent people.

At all events, the news that Mr. Bolitho had completed a play before his death was received with the keenest interest by all New Yorkers who had been following his work. Unfortunately, I cannot agree fully with the torrent of superlative praise which greeted the opening performance of "Overture." Some of the daily critics on this occasion actually discovered new words to add to their vocabulary. One can always measure the degree of emotional interest which a play stirs by the effort which the critics show to find new words adequate for describing the event. In this case (save for two or three healthy exceptions), one was led to believe that a modern masterpiece had at last appeared—a masterpiece comparable only with the finest products of Ibsen, Shaw or O'Neill. As a matter of fact, the story of "Overture" is told with great dignity, precision, and distinction of dialogue. It is full of spirit and incisive action. It is a play which appeals strongly to the intelligence and which, in theory at least, should appeal to the emotions as well. Its failure to strike an effective balance between mentality and emotion is due partly to the general subject-matter and partly to the failure of the author to present his story from a single human viewpoint.

The theatre demands, as part of its method of creating illusion, that the audience be able to identify itself emotionally with at least one of the characters. In this respect, there is an analogy between a good play and a good actor, or a good musician. That thing which the concert musician calls "rapport" must be established from the first. One often has the experience, in listening to a fine pianist or a fine singer, of feeling a distinct lack of sympathy and understanding between the artist and the audience. The absence of such an understanding is so powerful a factor in public enjoyment that one can think of dozens of cases of really fine artists who have never become great successes, either on the operatic or the concert stage, whereas artists of lesser caliber have frequently become popular idols.

A skilfully written play manages to win the emotional sympathy of the audience for some one character almost from the start. From the moment this is done, the task of the playwright becomes easier, since he can then picture events and emotions as they affect this one character. Mr. Bolitho's play, in spite of all its inherent dramatic quality, in spite of the fine intelligence used in portraying its characters, always leaves a veil between itself and the audience. The audience is witnessing a picture in a frame and never becomes an emotional part of the action.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Part of the difficulty, of course, lies in the subject matter. The play tells the story of an abortive Communist revolution in an old German city of Westphalia about two years after the close of the great war. The nominal leader of the revolution is a young aristocrat who was formerly an officer in the German army, but behind his idealism stalks the realistic menace of the real Communist leader. It is the old story, which history repeats so often, of the idealistic moderates against the extreme left wing. The entire action takes place in the council chamber of the town, beginning with the scene in which the members of the council meet the delegates of the people, passing through the stage in which the revolutionists have seized power, and ending with the crushing of the revolt by the Prussian military authority. In spite of this material, the play is obviously not designed as propaganda. Mr. Bolitho has written a drama which might have been written equally well around the Gironde party in France, or around the Kerensky party in Russia. It is a play in which the selfish interests of various groups and people result in the ultimate breakdown of all loyalties. Even the girl who is in love with the young aristocrat and has agreed to follow him to death if necessary, ultimately loses courage when forced to witness a wholesale execution and saves her own life by the betrayal of a comrade.

The characters, as individuals, are all well drawn. They are human beings and not mere types. But the author's very effort to understand all sides results in a splitting up of the sympathy of the audience and in preventing that essential emotional sympathy with one individual or group which gives to any play its chief illusion and its chief dramatic strength.

It is doubly unfortunate that Mr. Bolitho did not live to coöperate in the rehearsal and production of his play, because I am sure that he would inevitably have woven into it many of the essential elements which it now lacks. In Captain Ritter, the aristocrat, in Katie Tauler, the Communist girl, in Maxim, the real Communist leader, in Dr. Levy, the publisher of a radical paper, in various members of the town council, and conspicuously in the Prussian general who eventually crushes the revolt, Mr. Bolitho has drawn people of flesh and blood. He has established a basis for their curious and intense conflict. But he is like a sculptor who has molded many extraordinary figures for a group but has not yet composed these figures into the ultimate monument. It is this final grouping and arrangement which most playwrights, except those of long experience, effect during the rehearsals of a play. Frequently the direction of an audience's sympathy can be changed or crystallized by the alteration of a few lines. Had Mr. Bolitho lived, he would surely, with all his inborn instinct for character and drama, have sensed the necessary changes and have made them promptly with the same skill and quick insight which he has shown in the first rough sketch we have now been privileged to see.

Bela Blau, the producer, has done well by Mr. Bolitho's work in giving it an excellent cast and one amazingly fine setting by Mr. Oenslager. I have seldom seen a play in which the minor parts were taken with more authority and skill. This is particularly true of the group composing the town council and of Carlos Zizold, whose portrayal of General Von Hoeffer is easily the outstanding performance of the play, with the possible single exception of Pat O'Brien as the Communist, Maxim. Colin Clive, who makes his first appearance on the American stage, is an English actor of the modern school who apparently believes in swallowing two-thirds of his words and in compensating for this by attacking certain syllables with something approaching ferocity. If Mr. Clive had one-half less of his instinct for heroic poses and one-half more of the natural authority and strength of Pat O'Brien, the play might have succeeded in riveting the sympathy of the audience with Captain Ritter. Barbara Robbins, a newcomer to Broadway, gives a simple, forthright and always convincing performance of Katie Tauler. All in all, this play deserves a much greater success than it will probably achieve. It deserves, above all, what it can never receive—the last loving attentions of its author, so that it would no longer be what it now is, a rich promise and an unfinished tragedy. (At the Longacre Theatre.)

Oh Promise Me!

THE CURRENT viewpoint of theatrical producers is quite well illustrated by this satirical farce on trumped-up breach of promise suits. The authors, Howard Lindsay and Bertrand Robinson, have all the material at hand for excellent travesty. Many of their scenes are cleverly contrived and swiftly written, and being confided to an unusually capable group of actors, emerge with hilarious vitality. But a black pall of smut hovers over the whole affair, forcing one to the fatigued conclusion that whatever the nominal excuse, whatever the technical category of nine out of ten modern plays, behind them all stalks a sordid spirit of competition in blatant language and indelicate situations.

In general, it is high time that blackmail of all sorts came in for a drubbing, and particularly that form which furnishes the bread and meat and gravy for the tabloid press. There are evidences that the authors of "Oh Promise Me!" started out with the admirable intention of showing up the gullibility and stupidity of the American people and the juries that represent them. The absurd impossibility of the plot at many stages loudly proclaims that the whole business should be taken as roaring satire. So far so good. But in building satire it is wholly unnecessary to try to outdo the thing satirized—in this case by a raucous use of language and scenes which even the tabloids would avoid, for the simple and effective reason that the printed word carries a responsibility from which the theatre apparently thinks it is immune.

The most unfortunate part of the current situation—as exemplified by the present play—is that an efficient blue pencil could do a thorough clean-up job in fifteen minutes. Nothing in the plot would have to be changed in order to transform the play from exploited dirt to honest and pungent satire. One has to judge the intentions behind the plays from internal evidence. When filthy wise-cracks are inserted and emphasized without the faintest necessity, one can draw but a single conclusion—that they are inserted for their box-office value, and not to serve the genuine purposes of the play itself. (At the Morosco Theatre.)

Holly around the Crib

Why did they put the thorns so close to Thee?
Was it that we might sorrow even now,
Remembering Thy cruel agony—
Thy thorn-pierced brow?

Behold, I bend me down and kiss the lovely crown
Of golden curls about Thy Baby head.
(The holly berries are so very red!
I cannot bear them—I would fain forget!)
Sorrow will claim Thee, Sweetling, all too soon,
But oh! not yet—not yet!

SISTER MARY OF THE VISITATION.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

The Best of Them

Royal Charles: Ruler and Rake, by David Loth. New York: Brentano's. $4.00.

The Decline of Merry England, by Storm Jameson. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Company. $3.00.

DESPITE the cheapjack title, Mr. Loth's biography of Charles II is a competent life of the most attractive of the Stuart kings, pleasant enough but undistinguished save in one very important respect. It is distinguished as fact. It is, so far as we know, the first proper vindication of the most underrated and charming of British sovereigns. Quite unpretentiously, wholly unconsciously perhaps, it gives the lie to three generations of official history.

When I say "official" history, I give away my case from the start. Official history, in the case of the English, is very frequently great literature; official history in the persons of Green, Macaulay, Froude, Dickens and others has enriched the landscape with picturesque monuments which few would like to see removed. The worst that one can say about official history is that, taking a cue from one or two of her more romantic sisters among the Muses, she has created and maintained a legend. It is hard, in a mere notice, to tell the whole truth about the great Whig lie. It goes very far back into the beginnings of British annals. The hide of the legend has in course of time toughened into so amorphous a texture that the lance-like counterattacks from Right and Left, from Catholic and radical, from a Laski or a Belloc, barely leave a dint. Stripped to its essential bones, the official theory of British history would read somewhat as follows:

The progress of England is made to coincide with that of constitutional and parliamentary government, especially the House of Commons, with democracy in the current cant. Feudal revolutions against the legitimate king, mere spasms of banditry, are treated like crusades. The *fait accompli* is glorified as an act of God in the case of Bolingbroke against Richard II, of the Tudor against Richard III, of Cromwell against the Martyr King, of organized wealth and Protestant "democracy" against his son in 1688. The Catholic Church is kindly patronized by all these great men so long as she is the only form of Christianity in Europe; once the Reformation is under way, the latter's fortunes are strangely linked with those of the great democratic dogma. They rise and fall together. When the principle of capitalism in turn appears toward the end of the sixteenth century, the thrice-glorious trinity is complete, and woe be to the institution or individual who appears to get in the way of its juggernaut advance. The disgraceful disregard for fact and decency with which Whig writers whoop up the good old triple cause from 1534 onward really verges on lunacy; Froude, for example, reads like a madman up to the point when we are aware that he writes like a mucker. His job was to justify the mysterious ways of the English Reformation to Englishmen. Macaulay, in the meantime, had composed his even dirtier one of justifying the "glorious" revolution of 1688. Macaulay, be it said in passing, had candor and generosity, almost a sort of sincerity, and thus his piece of political jobbery, written primarily for party men, looks on the surface less odious than Froude's religious one. The Greens, Trevelyans *et tutti quanti* in a meeker and slyer fashion have merely followed suit, and completed the task.

The test of the whole business, of course, is the Stuart era from 1603 to 1688, especially its last twenty-eight years, the period of the Restoration. England then stood, as it were, at the parting of the ways. The nation might maintain the tradition of absolute and popular monarchy against the land-grabbing, money-grubbing middle class, as represented by their "democratic" Parliament. It might, in Miss Jameson's phrase, in "The Decline of Merry England," retreat down the green and ancient ways haunted by the shades of Chaucer and Pepys and the Cavalier poets and the Somerset folk-songs, or it might take the concrete highroad straight into the arms of the Manchester, Birmingham, the industrial slum, Mr. Bumble and the Circumlocution Office. In the Revolution of 1688 it made its choice, and we all know the results. But from mid-century to 1685 the somewhat frail, black-avised and good-natured figure of a single man, a mere man of pleasure, as he has been written down, stood between his country and its ultimate catastrophe.

The essential feature of Charles's reign was of course the problem of religious toleration, in which he proved himself the crowned pioneer of his times. Mr. Loth makes it quite clear that the efforts of the king, and those of his brother and maligned successor, James II, were principally devoted to securing that liberty of conscience through which poor people who knew no better would be enabled to worship God as they saw fit. This truism of English history is twisted by historians like Green into a tremendous Papist conspiracy to secure royal absolutism and the papal supremacy all at one swoop. Unfortunately the Stuarts' efforts were constantly blocked by organized wealth, as represented in the "democratic" Parliament, and also by the Anglican Church, in its Anglo-Catholic phase, otherwise the most indurate supporter of the monarchy.

In the meantime, while bishops were meditating and courtiers plotting, Charles II held his own. He saw to it that the deluge came not in his lifetime. He had the wit, the coolness, the presence of mind, the ability to mix with anyone and everyone which were, unfortunately, lacking in his noble father. When the Great Fire came on London he could have been seen on horseback encouraging the desperate population, ordering houses to be destroyed in order to break its advance, behaving in all respects like the father of his people, as indeed he was. Aftr all was over he recommended to Wren that "all new construction should be done on a general plan so that London 'would appear to the world as purged by fire to a wonderful beauty and comeliness.'" It was an admirable design, writes Mr. Loth, but it bore no resemblance to the London that actually grew up. Ah no!

As for the value of having such a character, in a sense the last and best of his race, in charge of the executive, it can best be studied in Miss Jamesons's book. The latter will perhaps forgive me if instead of quoting from one of her spirited chapters, I append a paragraph by Mr. Loth indicating what her "merrie England" might have been had Charles lived, had his more stolid and tactless brother been enabled to continue the second Stuart absolutism:

"In all England only incorrigible fanatics made any complaint about the conduct of foreign affairs. The rest of Europe was suffering the misfortunes of war; England was peaceful and prosperous. Money poured into the country in unprecedented streams. The scattered colonies were growing into an empire. His Majesty's jests were repeated everywhere . . . his solicitude for common men was extolled, his generosity, good taste, mercy and genius were set forth by sincere admirers."

It sounds remarkably like the plutocratic paradise which is eternally in the back of the minds of Messrs. Froude, Macaulay and Green. But something is lacking to the picture formed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SELECTED POEMS
of
THOMAS WALSH
Late Associate Editor of "The Commonweal"

With a Memoir by John Bunker and Appreciations by Edward L. Keyes and Michael Williams

FOR the last quarter century Thomas Walsh held a unique place in the literary world. His studies and translations in Spanish literature brought to him high honors and among other decorations the Order of Isabella of Spain.

In America Thomas Walsh will be remembered as a figure who moved through the world of letters as poet, philosopher and friend of those whose main interests lie in artistic endeavors. His keen appreciation of poetry and his discerning critical powers are best exemplified in those two outstanding anthologies which will remain for years a monument to his scholarship—"The Hispanic Anthology" and "The Catholic Anthology." In the latter will be found not only the most beautiful poetry of Catholic writers, but also the poems of those not of that faith who in their poetry showed something of that spirit which guided him in his selection.

We consider it a rare privilege to present to the public this volume of selected verse by a poet so greatly admired and respected in contemporary times.

PRICE $2.50

LINCOLN MacVEAGH—THE DIAL PRESS
152 WEST 13th STREET—NEW YORK

Binders for Your Commonweals

In response to numerous requests from subscribers we have arranged to supply attractive binders for individual volumes of THE COMMONWEAL.

The binders are loose leaf with a capacity of twenty-six issues. They are handsomely bound in red imitation leather with stiff covers, red skytogen lined. The backbone of the cover is stamped in gold with the number of the volume and its inclusive dates. The price of the binder is $1.65 postage paid to any address.

In ordering the binders specify the number of copies you desire and the number of the volume. Please indicate if you wish to be placed on our list to receive future binders as issued.

THE COMMONWEAL
Grand Central Terminal
New York City

according to their image of what the true England should and must be. There is a Stuart, a man at the head of affairs. Popular monarchy, in Mr. Belloc's phrase, is actually a going concern! "I would," said Charles in an unforgettable sentence, "have everyone live under his own vine and fig-tree. Give me my just prerogative, and for subsidies I will never ask more unless I should be so unhappy as to have a war on our hands, and that at most may be one summer's business at sea!"

Anathema! Away with it! Bring on your glorious revolution, ye Whigs and Tories alike! Bring on your Bill of Rights, Mother of Parliaments, to make the world safe for the wealthy, your Act of Settlement to send all good Protestants home in peace to bed. In the meantime the good and beautiful English life, a time of grace and dignity and rich merriment, is a thing of the past, and so much the better. In the meantime, in his dim bedchamber at Whitehall, King Charles received the Blessed Sacrament from the hands of a Benedictine, with no epitaph save that of his page-boy, Thomas Bruce, in the latter's memoir: "My good and gracious king and master, Charles the Second, and the best that ever reigned over us, died in peace and glory."

CUTHBERT WRIGHT.

A Poem of America

The Bridge, by Hart Crane. New York: Horace Liveright. $2.50.

"THE BRIDGE" undoubtedly marks the highest literary achievement of the year in the United States. It has awakened both critics and public to the fact that Mr. Hart Crane is one of the few authentic poets now writing in English.

By means of a symbol drawn from the long steel leap whereby Brooklyn Bridge spans one of the vital waterways of the continent, coupling the populations of two crowded islands, Mr. Crane has tried to describe America herself as a bridge between the past and the future. In other words, his theme is, virtually, the complete history and destiny of the American people. By its very scope and grandeur, it seems to entail the defeat of its exponents. Doubtless Mr. Crane has failed to realize completely its implications and its final significance. But meanwhile he has done three things: he has attempted to bring to some actual artistic issue the basic philosophy of American life, he has presented a symbol wherein that philosophy may be embodied, and he has created a language of profound energy and vitality, one of the most original and searching of poetic styles.

As an expression of American idealism, "The Bridge" marks another stage in our emergence from complete servility to the cultural ideals of European life. Such servility was not contemptible; it was the inevitable condition of a culture stemming out of older civilizations, and a natural aspect of America's derivation from the social traditions of England and Continental countries. Yet even in the nineteenth century writers like Melville, Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman appeared who resisted Longfellow's or James's servility to foreign standards, or reproved the surrender of such talents as Lowell's and Bryant's to the charms of European legend. These writers succeeded in arresting the moral and social flux of the people in terms of aesthetic significance, and they wrote what deserve to rank as the American masterpieces. Of these writers, Whitman is Hart Crane's philosophical master, a fact demonstrated not only in that section of "The Bridge" called "Cape Hatteras," but in Mr. Crane's prose writings as well. The influence has had an undecided effect, but none the less Mr. Crane's poem must be added to this list of books as forming a conceptual

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

summary of many lesser poems and of the central motive in American thought. "The Bridge" unquestionably displays the vision of a major poet.

Its symbolism is its weakest aspect. It is not an epic, but a series of lyrics, and because of the variety of uses and meanings to which the bridge is put, it is never clearly established either as a device for organic unity or as a firm concept. Yet in spite of undecided motivation, this symbol remains as impressive in grandeur as it is adaptable to the poet's uses.

Mr. Crane has created a poetry of great complexity and subtlety, which makes every possible demand on the insight and perceptions of the reader. But it is a poetry compact of dynamic energy. It adapts itself to the various meters, forms and tones that Mr. Crane employs, and enables him to construct his ideas into a great variety of images. His success at expression is of course not uniform, and detailed analysis is not possible here. But in those sections called "The Dance," "The River," "Cutty Sark" and "The Tunnel," any reader will meet a poetry of eloquence and dignity, courageous enough to cope with the problems of America's moral development, and idealistic enough to vindicate her destiny among nations. "The Bridge" thus becomes a document of genuine historical significance, as well as an achievement that ranks high in the annals of twentieth-century poetry.

MORTON DAUWEN ZABEL.

Zweig's First Book

Claudia, by Arnold Zweig. New York: The Viking Press. $2.50.

IT IS doubtful if this first book by Arnold Zweig, reputed to have had a sweeping success in Germany, will remotely approximate in this country the popularity of his second, "The Case of Sergeant Grischa." It is no less strong in imagination and perception, but scarcely as appealing to a large group of readers.

This is not to say that "Claudia" is not a fine piece of work. It is decidedly that. Its prose is beautiful, its moods poetical but nicely balanced with an intentionally blurred background, and its situations intensely personal to its characters yet endowed with that touch of universality which is a mark of great works. Actually it is not a novel but a series of sketches based on certain psychological crises in the lives of a few characters. And throughout the author finds the golden mean of depicting the emotions of love midway between sentimentality and prosaic realism, treading delicately and sympathetically in the field of human relationships.

Perhaps the best of the group of sketches is "The Star." In it is exampled Zweig's talent. The melodramatic elements of the tale of a musician's search for one who would love him for himself alone is underemphasized in order that the dénouement may come with the vividness of a sudden and revelatory light thrown on the final failure of an artist to sacrifice fame to love. Told as a tale within a tale it loses none of its force, because its unfolding has at the same time thrown sharply into profile the characters of both Claudia, the narrator, and her listeners.

And again in the sketch "The Album," concerned, as it would at first appear, solely with Mrs. Eggeling's emotional reactions to her daughter's marriage, the story takes on new significance because of its indirect but clear definition of the shades and nuances of Claudia's nature. And it is in this indirection of description that the author excels.

JOHN GILLAND BRUNINI.

B. ALTMAN & CO.
FIFTH AVENUE at 34TH STREET
Telephone: MURray Hill 7000

Gentlemen's Outfitters

GIFT SLIPPERS

for Gentlemen

What single gift contains greater suggestion of comfort and leisure than a pair of gentlemen's Slippers? Altman offers numerous luxuriously made slippers at surprisingly moderate prices.

$1.95 to $8.50

MEN'S SLIPPERS
SIXTH FLOOR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

G. K. CHESTERTON

At the COLLEGE OF SAINT ELIZABETH, Convent Station, near Morristown, N. J., will lecture on

"CULTURE AND THE COMING PERIL"

Friday evening, January 9, at eight

Admission, $2.00

SALE OF HAND MADE HOOKED RUGS at the

GREEN PARROT RUG SHOP

145 East 47th Street, New York City

To be sold at attractive prices to enable us to give employment to women bread winners. The rugs are made at Madonna House—are unique in design and beautiful in color.

MANUSCRIPTS TYPED

Manuscripts neatly and accurately typed
50¢ per 1,000 words
Free carbon copy
BEATRICE BROWN
2405 West 4th Street JOPLIN,MO.

St. Hilda Guild, Inc.

CHURCH VESTMENTS, ALTAR LINEN
Ecclesiastical Embroidery
Conferences with reference to the adornment of churches
Old Embroidery Transferred
131 EAST 47th STREET NEW YORK
Vanderbilt 8761

PIUS X SCHOOL OF LITURGICAL MUSIC
COLLEGE OF THE SACRED HEART
133rd Street and Convent Avenue, New York

Justine Ward Method, Courses I, II, III, IV
Gregorian Chant (Music IV)
Gregorian Accompaniment
Liturgical Singing and Choir Conducting
Theory, Ear Training, Sight Reading Melody, Writing
Harmony I, II—Counterpoint I, II
Polyphony—Boy Choir—Musical Appreciation
Methods and Principles of Teaching Applied to Music
Vocal Production—Organ—Violin—Piano

Victor Records of Gregorian Chants
Pius X Choir conducted by Justine Ward

Lessons in all the above subjects privately or in class
For further information, address the Secretary—Bradhurst 8006

A Brave Muse

Bridges, by Katherin Brégy. Atlanta: The Bozart Press. $1.50.

ONE WHO has read "The Poets' Chantry" and "Poets and Pilgrims," and has consequently acquired a genuine respect for their author, comes naturally with a friendly prejudice to critical appreciation of this slim volume of poems. The exquisite format, which suggests springtime and lilacs, is a perfect dress for the delicate and wholly feminine verses. To say that a woman writes in a feminine manner in these times of deliberately thwarted femininity is to pay her no mean compliment; for it shows that she has been bravely intelligent enough to be herself rather than to ape some man poet she happens to admire. Because she is a woman she writes of herself and her reactions to things rather than of the things themselves; so that one gets to know her through her poetry, thus doing oneself a considerable favor.

Miss Brégy's Muse is whimsical. One reads about "The Smiling Lady" who will use her smile to keep the world from knowing anything about her, only to turn over the pages to the lady who tells us all about her real self in a confession called "The Sword," a poem which compares rather well with Mrs. Meynell's "Renouncement":

> "I have set my will as a sword between us, love—
> *Do not break my sword!"*

The adaptations and translations from the French of Paul Claudel included in the volume are genuine contributions to poetry; for example, the clear-visioned truth in his "Only the flash of an angel's sword, and behold! reality all about us" has been paraphrased without disadvantage in the poem "Reality," beginning:

> "It is not death, my love, but life
> Which shuts you out—"

Miss Brégy's more tender-hearted readers who have puzzled, without the power to express their bewilderment as does she, over the prodigality of nature in bringing forth flowers and insects and birds in such superabundance that many perish cruelly, will welcome her sympathetic verses on the unkind mockery of

> "Little frozen peach blossoms,
> And shivering lilacs,
> And magnolias bruised and multitudinous upon the ground"

by the "betraying kiss of the cold" in a too-early spring, and of the "Lady of Locust Tree" by "the curse of frail, feminine things destined to outlive their mates." There is, too, a pathos in many of the verses that is the fruitage of artistic economy, which is one of Miss Brégy's chief virtues in prose as well as in verse.

SISTER M. ELEANORE.

Self-Defeating Violence

The Back to Backs, by J. C. Grant. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, Incorporated. $2.00.

THIS story can have few equals in any time for unalloyed bestiality, violence, ugliness and misery. Hagger, its stage, is an English mining town; its characters are the desperate members of a mining family divided against themselves by passions as awful as those by which each is consumed for three hundred pages; its terrible and terrifying incidents, piled up as they are with no respite whatsoever, result in becoming those

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"unconvincing possibilities" condemned alike by Aristotle and by common sense; its obvious thesis, the shame and disgrace cast upon a civilized country by the existence of such degradation, fails in its purpose, partly because it is so evident, partly because the preacher of it, the author, persists far beyond the saturation point of his readers.

And such an effect is the more to be regretted since the story is written with real skill and with unmistakable honesty. The author's thesis is praiseworthy in the extreme. Such places as Hagger, such conditions as it engenders, do exist and are a disgrace to any nation, to any system of government. But because, shall we say, of a perversity of human nature (whether salutary or unfortunate is perhaps unanswerable) the reforms of the reformer who overreaches himself and his mark are seldom accomplished, and the verbal presentation of the necessity for them is usually not only ineffectual but inartistic.

One recalls other stories which likewise present miserable and heartrending scenes and conditions: Tolstoi's "War and Peace"; Thomas Burke's "Limehouse Nights"; Arthur Morrison's pitiful and humorous "Tales of Mean Streets." These have won a high literary place for themselves because their writers knew how to mingle force and restraint, understood when to temper, when to stop. But because Mr. Grant does not know these things or at all events does not practise them, he leaves his readers with a sense, not of tragedy with its reality and its catharsis, but of a nightmare with its unreality, soon to be forgotten once one is fully awake.

And in closing one may say that this effect is heightened by the introduction of Mr. Liam O'Flaherty whose bitterness and vehemence of attack breed at the start antagonism rather than sympathy and coöperation.

MARY ELLEN CHASE.

An Objective Analysis

Tweleve Years in the Catholic Church, by John L. Stoddard. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons. $3.00.

ONE FEELS, coming to the end of this thoroughly interesting book, that the author did not name it properly. Except for the preface and some notes at the end, what befell him in his twelve years in the Catholic Church is hardly alluded to. Rather, he should have called it "A Look at the Foundations of Christianity" or some such title. For it is Mr. Stoddard's summing up, by chapters, the grounds for belief in such vital things as the Divinity of Christ, the authenticity and the chronology of the New Testament, the primacy of Peter, etc., which catch and hold the reader's undivided attention.

Expecting to read some personal experiences of a convert, one finds, instead, excellently grouped for reference, the results of years of study and discussion. Scripture, patrology, the classics, tomes on theology as well as modern magazines, all have been made use of by the author, and his gleanings, remarkably lucid and apt, are placed at the service of the reader. Of particular value are the footnotes, especially in the chapters which treat of Saint Peter and the catacombs, subjects of which the average reader has scant knowledge and an underlying curiosity.

Laying the book down, one does not need the publisher's note concerning Mr. Stoddard's translations of important European publications, to realize that his twelve years in the Catholic Church have been spent in wide and constructive reading and thinking.

GRACE H. SHERWOOD.

NEXT WEEK

How our prosperity must of necessity contribute to our eventual economic maladjustment in a circle that we know now only too well is vicious, FEAR, FORESIGHT AND FINANCE, by John Carter reveals He points out how in our flush times our surplus capital goes to speed up production that is already at a high pitch to yield us prosperity. This causes overproduction, a break down in distribution, price cutting, sour inventories, confusion and fear—such as we are experiencing. An understanding of these fundamentals, we suggest, is necessary before a workable remedy will be devised. . . . BOLIVAR'S DREAM, by Herbert F. Wright, is our contribution to the celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the George Washington of South America. An understanding of Bolivar's aspirations and their appeal to our Southern neighbors, is a splendid basis for the strengthening of our sympathies and friendships. . . . A WALK WITH JANUARY, by Robert Sparks Walker, is a delightful nature article which will be enjoyed by the stay-by-the-fires (or stay-by-the-radiators) as well as those who venture afield. . . . Louis Minsky, New York correspondent of the London *Jewish Chronicle* and also of the London *Jewish World,* in THE AWAKENING OF JUDAISM gives a finely tempered and comprehensive survey of the trends of Jewish thought and faith. . . . NOTRE DAME'S TRIUMPH, by Herbert Reed (Right Wing), is a swiftly moving analysis of the now famous phenomenon among football teams. We should like to say that it would have to be swiftly moving to keep up with the Notre Dame football team, but the joke seemed a little thin to present other than in this Ciceronian circumlocution. In sober earnest, the article is a fine tribute to the spirit of the college, as well as to the team.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ST. XAVIER COLLEGE
For Women
4928 COTTAGE GROVE AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILL.
Conducted by the Sisters of Mercy
Liberal Arts Course, Pre-Medical, Music, Art
Teachers' Promotional Credit Classes
Autumn, Winter, and Spring Quarters
Send for Announcement

BURR PRINTING HOUSE
FOUNDED 1837
FRANKFORT AND JACOB STREETS
NEW YORK, N. Y.
CATALOGUES, MAGAZINES, BOOKS
AND COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Only Public Appearance
***Abbé* ERNEST DIMNET**
Canon of the Cathedral of Cambrai
Author of "The Art of Thinking"
LECTURE EXTRAORDINARY
"America's Interest in Thinking and in Religion
—Impressions of 1930 America"
COOPER UNION 8th Street and Astor Place
Sun., Dec. 21st At 3 P. M.
Tickets—Reserved Seats—$1.50, $1.00 and 75 cents
For sale at Cooper Union Supply Store, Columbia University Book Shop, Journalism Building, and at office of
DISCUSSION GUILD, 15 E. 40th St., Lex. 7483

Briefer Mention

Four Faultless Felons, by G. K. Chesterton. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company. $2.50.

IT IS by now established that the brilliant and impredicable literary phenomenon whose name is signed to this book cannot write a commonplace story. His formula varies, even his zest sometimes varies. "Four Faultless Felons," for example, is not the equal of that marvelous, untouchable fantasy, "The Man Who Was Thursday"; it is not the equal of the first Father Brown tales, so masterfully motivated, loaded with such careless richness of atmosphere and truth. But "Four Faultless Felons" is nevertheless better worth reading, more freshly surprising and fuller of genuine intellectual authority than nine-tenths of the novels which are put before us today. Mr. Chesterton's heroes and heroines have never left a thought uncompleted or a conclusion hanging—and it is proof of his power and importance as a writer that he makes these decisive and lofty people seem real—often grimly real. They are never soft or sentimental or optimistic: they are what we expect heroines and heroes to be—heroic. "Four Faultless Felons" presents the usual ingenious Chestertonian narrative frame—this time a club whose condition of membership is that the candidate shall stand accused before the world of some vice, because he has practised on an epical scale its corresponding virtue. The saviour of his country shall be thought a traitor, the ascetic shall be thought a sybarite, and so on. The ensuing tales are not of course, actually actual; but they are joyous and funny, wise and deeply true, and that is a great deal.

Dog Days, by Stewart Edward White. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Incorporated. $2.50.

MR. WHITE mainly reminisces in this book, which has been subtitled "Other Times: Other Dogs." For the lover of dogs there is entirely too much of "other times"; for those not interested in dogs the book will have a narrow appeal. After all, the author's dissertation on the fine points of partridge hunting can, by his own confession, engage only a small group. And the horseback and early-automobile age are too close to the present era to possess the novelty of the unknown. Yet the evident relish with which Mr. White writes invests the book with an engaging charm, bulwarked by a fine sense of humor and a thorough knowledge of his Michigan and California scenes.

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES J. WALSH, writer and lecturer, is the author of "The Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries" and other books.

CAROL NOEL is a California poet.

LOUIS GOLDING is the author of many books, his most recent being "Those Ancient Lands" and "The Prince or Somebody."

RICHARD LINN EDSALL is an essayist, poet and critic, now residing in New York.

ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN, professor of English at Wells College, is a poet and essayist. His latest books are "An Attic Room" and "Golden Falcon."

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH is the author of "Shepherds in Sackcloth" and many other books.

EUPHEMIA VAN RENSSELAER WYATT is the dramatic critic of the *Catholic World*.

HARVEY WICKHAM, recently deceased, was an American journalist and novelist. He was the author of "The Misbehaviorists," "The Impuritans" and "The Unrealists."

SISTER MARY OF THE VISITATION is a nun of the Visitation Order in Maryland.

CUTHBERT WRIGHT, author and critic, is associated with the Gunnery School, Washington, Conn.

MORTON DAUWEN ZABEL is a member of the faculty of Loyola College, Chicago, as well as associate editor of *Poetry*.

JOHN GILLAND BRUNINI is on THE COMMONWEAL staff of reviewers.

SISTER M. ELEANORE is a member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross and the author of "The Literary Essay" and "The Troubadours of Paradise."

MARY ELLEN CHASE is professor of English literature in Smith College and the author of "The Golden Ass and Other Essays."

GRACE H. SHERWOOD is a writer and critic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED